CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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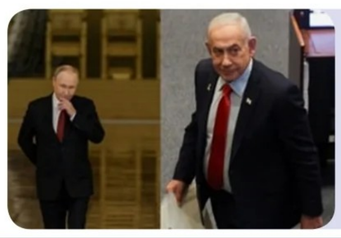

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PM Modi to visit Bengal, address rallies amid SIR row

Modi begins a two-day West Bengal visit today, unveiling major infrastructure projects and addressing rallies amid sharp political tensions.

KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit West Bengal today and tomorrow, January 17-18, to attend government programmes and address political rallies, amid a bitter dispute over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and the Enforcement Directorate's raid on TMC-linked consultancy I-PAC.

On January 17, Modi will reach Malda around 12:45 pm, flag off India's first Vande Bharat Sleeper Train between Howrah and Guwahati, and dedicate rail and road projects worth over Rs 3,250 crore. The PM will lay foundation stones for new railway lines, freight and maintenance facilities, and electrification projects.

On January 18, he will visit Singur in Hooghly district, inaugurating and flagging off development projects worth around Rs 830 crore. Singur, the former site of Tata Motors' Nano plant, remains politically symbolic. BJP leaders hope Modi's address will underscore industrial growth and investments, contrasting TMC's land-acquisition legacy.

The TMC has accused the BJP and Election Commission of harassing citizens through SIR, while BJP claims it is essential to remove illegal voters. The ED-I-PAC controversy further intensified political tensions, with Mamata Banerjee alleging attempts to steal election strategies.

Modi's two-day visit combines governance announcements, political messaging, and infrastructure inaugurations, aimed at bolstering BJP's visibility ahead of upcoming state polls, while addressing the contested electoral environment in Bengal.

BJP sweeps Maharashtra civic polls as Uddhav-Raj reunion falters

The BJP-led MahaYuti secured a sweeping victory in Maharashtra's municipal polls

MUMBAI

The reunion of Thackeray cousins Uddhav Thackeray and Raj Thackeray failed to stem the BJP-led Maha Yuti's sweeping victory in Maharashtra's municipal corporation elections, with the saffron party delivering a decisive blow in key urban centres, including Mumbai.

The Bharatiya Janata Party emerged as the single largest party in the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), ending decades of Thackeray family dominance and paving the way for its first-ever Mayor in India's richest civic body, with support from ally Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena.

Despite a joint push by Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and MNS president Raj Thackeray, the BJP, led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, maintained a firm grip on Mumbai. The only consolation for the Thackerays was the relatively weak performance of Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, whose party slipped to third place in the BMC. However, Fadnavis also succeeded in asserting dominance over his other deputy, Ajit Pawar, as the BJP outperformed both factions of the NCP even in their traditional strongholds like Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad.

The results offered little relief to the Congress and the I.N.D.I.A. bloc, extending their post-2024 Assembly election slump. In Mumbai's 227 wards, the BJP won or led in 90 seats, followed by Shiv Sena (UBT) with 57, Congress with 15, and smaller tallies for other parties. Across Maharashtra, the BJP posted commanding wins in Nagpur, Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad, while AIMIM expanded its footprint in several cities.

"The results of various municipal corporation elections indicate that NDA's bond with the people of Maharashtra has further deepened. Our track record and vision for development have struck a chord."
—Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

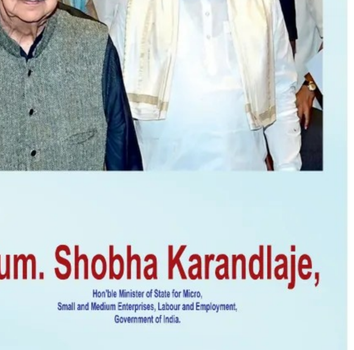
"BJP offered a developmental agenda. We put it before the people and they responded positively."
—Devendra Fadnavis, M'rashtra CM

K'taka BJP welcomes Mahayuti's win

Bengaluru: Karnataka BJP leaders on Friday hailed the BJP-led Mahayuti's sweeping victory in the Maharashtra local body elections, describing it as a clear reflection of the public mood. BJP state president B Y Vijayendra said the verdict demonstrated people's trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership at the Centre and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis's governance in Maharashtra. He expressed confidence that the same mandate would be repeated in the forthcoming Karnataka local body polls, including elections to the Greater Bengaluru Authority. Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka also welcomed the results, calling them a strong endorsement of development-oriented politics.

Points to Ponder

1. Breaking nearly three decades of Shiv Sena dominance, the BJP emerged as the single largest party in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections.
2. The BJP-led alliance is set to win around 125 of 227 seats in the BMC, Asia's richest civic body, with a 2025-26 budget of Rs 74,427 crore.
3. Counting for elections to Mumbai and 28 other municipal corporations, including Pune, was held on Friday, following a 54.77% voter turnout.



JOYFUL CITY FEST

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah inaugurates 'Bengaluru Habba 2026' at the steps of Vidhana Soudha, flagging off a colourful folk art procession in the presence of ministers, artists and dignitaries.

Gauri Lankesh murder accused elected to JMC

MUMBAI

In a development that has triggered widespread reactions, Shrikant Pangarkar, an accused in the murder of journalist-activist Gauri Lankesh and the Nalasopara arms and ammunition haul case, has won the Jalna Municipal Corporation (JMC) elections in Maharashtra as an independent candidate.

Pangarkar secured victory from Ward 13 of the JMC. While the BJP contested the seat, the Shiv Sena led by Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, which fought the elections independently in Jalna, did not field a candidate in this ward. His win has drawn attention due to his legal background and past political associations.

Gauri Lankesh was shot dead outside her Bengaluru residence on September 5, 2017. She was the editor of Lankesh Patrike, founded by her father P Lankesh, and later ran Gauri Lankesh Patrike. Pangarkar was granted bail by the Karnataka High Court in September 2024. Ahead of the October 2024 Assembly elections, Pangarkar was briefly inducted into the Shiv Sena and appointed campaign in-charge for Jalna.

QUICK READ

'Bengali-speaking migrants targeted in BJP-ruled states'

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday alleged that migrant workers from the state are being harassed and tortured in BJP-ruled states merely for speaking Bengali. Referring to protests in Murshidabad's Beldanga, she said the anger of the minority community was justified, as it stemmed from repeated attacks on migrant labourers outside West Bengal.

Don't certify JD(S)'s future: HDK counters Priyank Kharge

BENGALURU

Union Minister and JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy launched a scathing attack on Karnataka minister Priyank Kharge, saying he has no authority to issue "certificates" on whether the Janata Dal (Secular) will survive or collapse. Kumaraswamy asserted that it is the people of the state who will ultimately decide the party's future, not Congress leaders.

Reacting to Priyank Kharge's remark that JD(S) is nearing extinction, Kumaraswamy said there was no need for such certification from him. He mocked the Congress by referring to what he called a "lease-based" system within the party, alleging that several leaders, including ministers and even the Chief Minister, were effectively "borrowed" from JD(S).

He suggested Priyank Kharge should instead question his own party's internal contradictions. Kumaraswamy also took a swipe at Congress leadership tussles, claiming one faction believes its "lease period" is over and demands the chief minister's post, while another insists on continuing in office.

MEA URGENT ADVISORY

9K Indians asked to leave Iran by MEA

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday said it has advised around 9,000 Indian citizens currently residing in Iran to leave the country in view of the evolving situation there, adding that the developments are being closely monitored. Most of the Indians living in Iran are students.

Responding to queries on the safety of Indians in Iran, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the government has issued multiple advisories over recent days.

"Approximately 9,000 of our citizens are presently in Iran. In light of the recent developments, we have issued two or three advisories," he said. The advisories caution Indian nationals in India against travelling to Iran at this time and urge those already in the country to leave using whatever means are available.

Jaiswal emphasised that the government remains fully committed to the safety and well-being of Indian citizens abroad. "We are keeping a close watch on the situation, and as far as our citizens are concerned, we will do whatever is required to ensure their welfare," he stated.

Family members of Indians in Iran have been advised that they can complete the registration on behalf of their relatives through the MEA's online portal at **https://www.meaers.com/request/home.**

Government of Karnataka
Medical Education Department

A Historic event of Sigining of MoU between Department of Medical Education, and Azim Premji Foundation for construction and maintenance of 1000 bedded Super Specialty and Human Multi-organ Transplant Hospital.

17-01-2026, Saturday 11.00 A.M

Banquet Hall, Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru.

Inauguration :
Sri. Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Government of Karnataka,

Hon'ble Invitees:

Smt. Nirmala Seetharaman,
Hon'ble Central Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Government of India.

Sri. D.K Shivakumar,
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Government of Karnataka

Kum. Shobha Karandlaje,
Hon'ble Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Labour and Employment, Government of India.

Sri. Basavaraja S Horatti,
Hon'ble chairman of Karnataka Legislative Council

Sri. U.T. Khadar
Hon'bleSpeaker of Karnataka Legislative Assembly

Chairmanship
Dr. Sharanaprakash R Patil
Honble minister for Medical Education and Minister for Skill Development Entrepreneurship and Livelihood, Government of Karnataka.

Special Invitees :
Sri. Azim Premji
Chairman
Wipro company and Azim Premji Foundation

Honorary Presence :
Dr. Shalini Rajaneesh IAS
Chief Secretary,
Government of Karnataka

All Hon'ble Ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assembly and Council,

Welcomed by

Sri Mohammad Mohsin, IAS
Additional Chief Secretary to Government Medical Education Department

Dr. B L Sujatha Rathod
Director of Medical Education, Medical Education Department

Dr. Nagesh. N.S
Director,
Institute of Gastroenterology Sciences and Organ Transplant, Bengaluru.

A Warm Welcome to All

QUICK READ

Gadag Hosts District Talent Fountain Event

GADAG

Gadag District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and the School Education Department will host the District Level Talent Fountain and Kalotsava Program on January 17 at 10 am at Jagadguru Tontadarya High School near Bhumareddy Circle. Legislative Council Speaker Basavaraj Horatti and School Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa will attend as dignitaries, while Dr. H.K. Patil will inaugurate the event. Many local leaders, ministers, officials, and education officers are expected to participate and witness performances by talented students from across the district.

Minority Welfare Buildings Inauguration in Gadag

GADAG

B.Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan, Minister for Housing, Minority Welfare, and Waqf, will visit Gadag district on January 17, 2026, to inaugurate and lay foundation stones for several Minority Welfare Department buildings. The program will take place at Gangimadi City at 3:30 pm, near Abdul Kalam Shadi Mahal at 4:15 pm, and in Harti village at 5:00 pm. Dr. H.K. Patil, Legislative Council Speaker Basavaraj Horatti, Lok Sabha MPs, and MLAs from the district will attend, along with other dignitaries, to mark the event and support development initiatives for minority communities.

CM and DCM Traveling Together, Good Sign: MLA

MLA Shivaganga welcomes the news of CM and DCM flying to Delhi together

DAVANGERE

MLA Shivaganga Basavaraj described the departure of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar to Delhi on the same flight as a positive development. Both leaders were called by the party high command, and Basavaraj said this move shows a promising turn for the party.

Speaking in Davangere, the Channagiri MLA expressed confidence that DK Shivakumar, popularly known as DKshi, could be appointed Chief Minister for the next two years. "The hard work of DKshi and CM Siddaramaiah has strengthened the party. Siddaramaiah has already served 7.5 years and even broken records of past leaders. Now, we hope DKshi will also get an opportunity to lead," he said.

Basavaraj said that the high command's decision is important and must be respected. "It is good news that both leaders are going to Delhi together. The high command will take the right decision. DKshi is working tirelessly for the party, and I am confident he will get a chance," he added.

On questions about opinions favoring Siddaramaiah as CM for five years, Basavaraj emphasized that such decisions are for the high command. He also welcomed possible cabinet changes, saying that giving new leaders opportunities will improve governance.

He clarified that he has no personal ministerial ambitions. "I will work in any role assigned, whether as a party worker or minister. Serving the party is my priority," Basavaraj said.

This joint trip of CM and DCM signals a crucial moment for the party and upcoming leadership decisions.

Archaeological Excavation Resumes at Historic Lakkundi Village

After a recent gold treasure discovery, authorities restarted excavation work at Lakkundi with traditional rituals and scientific methods to uncover more historical evidence.

GADAG

Excavation work has officially resumed at Lakkundi village, a well-known historical site in Gadag district, following the recent discovery of gold ornaments. The work began after performing a special puja near the Sri Kote Veerabhadreshwara Temple, marking an important step in uncovering the area's rich past. The excavation was inaugurated by District Magistrate C.N. Sridhar, who conducted a Bhoomi Puja at the site. As part of the ceremony, camphor was lit, sacred chants were recited, and excavation tools such as spades, pickaxes, hammers, baskets, and hoes were worshipped before work began.

Officials said the excavation was originally launched on June 3, 2025, but had to be stopped due to heavy rains. With the arrival of the summer season, work has now restarted. The project is being carried out jointly by the district administration, the Lakkundi Heritage Development Authority, and the State Archaeology Department.

In the first phase, excavation will cover a 10 by 10 meter area. Authorities expect this phase to take around three to four months. Several senior officials, including the district police superintendent, archaeology department officers, and heritage experts, were present during the inauguration.

The renewed excavation follows a recent incident in which villagers discovered a hidden chest containing gold ornaments weighing between 470 and 700 grams, along with a copper vessel, while digging a house foundation. The estimated value of the items is around ₹60–70 lakh.

Lakkundi has historical importance as it was once ruled by several dynasties, including the Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Hoysalas, Kalachuris, and Vijayanagara rulers. Known for its temples and stone carvings, the village is believed to have once had 101 temples and wells. Experts hope the excavation will reveal more inscriptions, sculptures, and historical artifacts, further highlighting Lakkundi's heritage.

State-Level Bull Champion Kobbari Hori Passes Away

HAVERI

In Karjagi village of Haveri taluk, a famous bull known as Kobbari Hori, who had earned state-wide recognition in bull-fighting competitions, passed away due to illness.

The bull, named Karjagi Om-112, belonged to local farmer Jagadish Nagappa Manegara. He had purchased the bull four years ago for around ₹3 lakh. Over the years, Kobbari Hori became a celebrated name in the bull-fighting community, winning numerous prizes including three motorcycles, a silver mace, and cash awards in state-level competitions.

The owner, Jagadish Manegara, expressed deep sorrow at the loss of his prized bull, hugging it and shedding tears as news spread throughout the village. Thousands of fans and bull-fighting enthusiasts gathered to pay their last respects and witness the final journey of the champion bull.

A grand procession was organized through the main street of Karjagi village, drawing large crowds of admirers and locals who had come to honor the bull's legacy. The funeral rites were conducted on the owner's land, marking the end of a celebrated chapter in the local bull-fighting tradition.

Villagers and fans recalled the bull's achievements and his unmatched spirit in the arena. Many expressed their grief, saying that Kobbari Hori was not just a champion but a symbol of pride for Karjagi village and Haveri district. The bull's legacy is expected to be remembered for years in state-level bull-fighting circles.

Speeding Car Collides With Bike, Riders Injured

GADAG

In Lakshmeshwar taluk of Gadag district, a serious accident occurred when a speeding car collided head-on with a bike near Ramgiri. The impact was so strong that the bike and its rider were thrown nearly ten feet into the air.

The incident, which happened two days ago, was recently captured on a nearby CCTV camera and has now come to public attention. Five people were seriously injured in the crash, including Ghausmuddin Onti (27), Fatima Ghausmuddin Onti (53), Khubuddin Onti (5), Gangavva Naiker (75), and Bhimappa Naiker (80). All of them have been admitted to the hospital and are receiving treatment for their injuries. Eyewitnesses said the car was moving at a high speed and appeared to lose control before hitting the bike. Local authorities have registered a case and are investigating the incident further. Residents of the area have urged drivers to follow speed limits and drive cautiously, especially near busy roads, to prevent such accidents in the future. Police officials also advised people to avoid distractions while driving and ensure proper safety measures, such as wearing helmets and seatbelts. The community has expressed concern over road safety, emphasizing the need for stricter traffic monitoring to avoid similar accidents. The families of the injured are being supported by neighbors and local volunteers during the recovery process.

Traffic Rule Violations to Bring Fines Home

HAVERI

The police department in Haveri is introducing a new system to strictly control traffic rule violations in the city. With the help of advanced technology, traffic offenders will now receive fine notices directly at their home addresses. This move aims to reduce accidents and improve road safety.

Traffic rules are often ignored on Haveri's main roads. Many riders travel without helmets or seat belts, overspeed within city limits, use mobile phones while driving, and violate one-way rules. Triple riding and reckless driving have also increased. These violations have led to frequent accidents, causing serious injuries and even deaths in some cases.

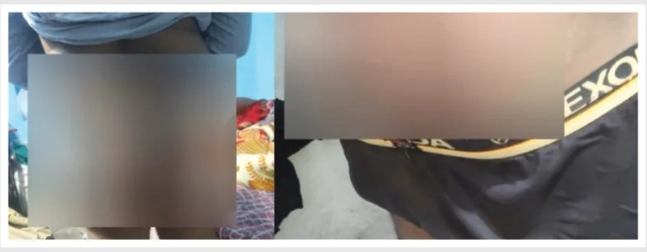
To address this growing problem, the police are launching the Integrated Traffic Management System (ITMS). Under this system, AI-based cameras will be installed at six important locations across the city. These cameras can clearly capture vehicle number plates, rider faces, and even the color of vehicles. Once a violation is detected, a fine notice will be generated and sent to the registered address of the vehicle owner.

Grand Harjatre Celebrated with Devotion and Festive Meals

DAVANGERE

The annual Harjatre was celebrated with great enthusiasm and religious spirit at the Panchamasali Gurupeeth in Harihar during the Sankranti festival. As in previous years, a large number of devotees gathered on Friday to take part in the celebrations and receive blessings.

The Math premises were attractively decorated, creating a festive atmosphere similar to a wedding celebration. Devotees arrived from several towns and districts across the state, making the event lively and vibrant. Public representatives, religious leaders, and community members were also present and participated in the rituals with devotion. One of the main attractions of the Harjatre was the special festive meal served to devotees. Traditional food items such as jola rotti, different vegetable palya, rice and sambar, hot green chillies, huggi, curd rice, and wheat payasam were prepared and distributed as prasadam. Devotees enjoyed the meal, which symbolized the joy of the harvest season. Organizers appreciated the efforts of donors and volunteers who contributed grains, vegetables, rice, and thousands of rotis for the event. During the stage program, Vachanananda Sri observed the Sankranti tradition by offering sesame seeds and jaggery to guests. He delivered a spiritual message focusing on social harmony, service, and the value of traditions. The Harjatre was organized under the guidance of the Jatra Mahotsav Committee, led by Basavaraja Veerapura. Special transport arrangements were made from the Math to help devotees reach the venue easily.



Police Brutality Alleged Against Cancer Patient During Interrogation

YADGIR

Serious allegations of police brutality have emerged from Yadgir district, where a man suffering from blood cancer was allegedly assaulted during police interrogation. The victim, identified as Mehboob, a resident of Kembhavi, was reportedly taken to the Kembhavi police station under the pretext of questioning and was beaten severely.

According to family members, Mehboob was assaulted indiscriminately by police personnel, resulting in serious injuries, including a broken leg. They have expressed deep anger and shock over what they describe as inhuman treatment of a person already battling a life-threatening illness. Mehboob is currently undergoing treatment at a hospital in Kalaburagi, where doctors are monitoring his condition. Sources said the incident took place about four days ago. Mehboob and another man named Sahil, originally from Uttar Pradesh, used to sell toys at local fairs. In August last year, Sahil died after falling from an autorickshaw. Following the incident, police reportedly suspected Mehboob and summoned him for questioning related to the accident that occurred nearly five months ago.

Family members claim Mehboob was not formally arrested earlier and was moving freely until police detained him recently. They allege that instead of following legal procedures.

PAPAYA CROP THREAT

Papaya Crops Hit by Virus, Farmers Suffer Losses

DAVANGERE

Farmers in Jagalur taluk of Davangere district are facing severe losses as a virus attacks papaya crops across several acres. Those who invested loans in cultivation are now struggling to recover their money.

The virus causes black spots on the fruits, making them unsellable. Traders are offering very low prices for affected papayas. Around 30 to 40 acres have been affected so far, and many farmers have had to remove entire crops to prevent the virus from spreading further. Paramesh, a farmer from Makunte village, shared his losses. "I spent ₹1–2 lakh for two acres of papaya, planting about 1,000 saplings brought from Maharashtra. The fruits developed black spots, and buyers refused to pay proper prices. Medicines and sprays didn't help. After years of growing papaya, profit feels impossible this year," he said.

Another farmer, Kalleshappa, explained that papaya cultivation in his village has sharply declined. "Papaya was grown on 20 acres before. Now only two acres remain. Fruits are turning yellow and falling early, and medicines have no effect," he said. Shivanna, who invested ₹50,000 to ₹1.5 lakh per acre, added, "Everything is lost. Many farmers are considering quitting farming and working as daily wage laborers."

Raghavendra Prasad, Joint Director of the Horticulture Department, advised farmers not to panic. He said the virus spreads faster in hot weather and instructed farmers to remove infected fruits immediately and contact the department for guidance and support.

Bengaluru Woman Dies During Boating at Gokarna Beach

KARWAR

A tragic incident was reported from Gokarna Paradise Beach, where a 58-year-old woman from Bengaluru lost her life during a boating trip. The deceased has been identified as Nagarathinam, who had visited the popular beach town along with her family for a short vacation.

According to sources, Nagarathinam went boating at Paradise Beach along with others. During the trip, she suddenly complained of severe discomfort and fell ill. Family members and locals immediately tried to arrange medical help and contacted the 108 emergency ambulance service. However, it is alleged that the ambulance did not arrive at the location on time, causing further delay in providing medical assistance.

As her condition worsened, the family arranged for a private ambulance from Kumta to rush her to a nearby hospital. Unfortunately, Nagarathinam died on the way while being shifted for treatment. The incident has left her family members in deep shock and grief.

The incident occurred under the limits of the Gokarna police station. Police officials have registered a case and are looking into the circumstances surrounding her death. Initial information suggests that there were no external injuries, and the death may have been caused by a sudden health issue. Further details will be known after medical reports are reviewed. This incident has raised concerns about emergency medical response facilities at tourist destinations like Gokarna, especially during peak travel seasons. Visitors and locals have stressed the need for faster ambulance services and better medical arrangements near beaches and tourist spots.

The police have advised tourists to take necessary health precautions and seek immediate help if they feel unwell during water activities.

QUICK READ

Leopard Sighting Reported on Hubballi Road

HUBBALLI

A possible leopard was seen running inside the Asma Industries compound on Karwar Road early Friday morning. The incident occurred around 5:17 am and was captured on CCTV, which clearly showed a large animal moving quickly across the premises. Locals who saw the animal immediately suspected it was a leopard, causing concern in the area. Forest department officials have been informed, but they are yet to confirm whether the animal is indeed a leopard or another species. Residents are advised to stay cautious and avoid venturing near the compound until authorities complete their inspection.

Dog Bite Cases Rising Rapidly, Vaccinations Doubled

Dog bite incidents are increasing across the region, causing alarm among local residents

HUBBALLI

The number of people being bitten by dogs is rising sharply, creating fear among residents. Many are now hesitant to walk on the streets, as dog bite cases continue to increase in the state.

Hubballi KIMS reports that over ten new patients visit daily for treatment after being bitten by dogs. In total, more than a thousand people receive vaccinations at the hospital each month. In the past five years, five people have died of rabies at KIMS, highlighting the seriousness of the issue. Patients seeking treatment come not only from Hubballi-Dharwad but also from neighboring districts such as Gadag, Bagalkot, Haveri, Belgaum, and Uttara Kannada. The number of dog bite cases has steadily risen, reflecting a concerning trend. In 2021, 5,000 people were vaccinated at Hubballi KIMS, while in 2025, the figure reached 10,868 — showing that the number of people getting vaccinated has doubled in five years. Despite the government spending crores of rupees on controlling stray dogs, the situation has not improved.

The growing number of dog bites and the rising demand for vaccination indicate that more awareness and stronger preventive measures are urgently needed. Medical experts warn residents to be cautious, avoid stray dogs, and seek immediate treatment if bitten to prevent rabies, which remains life-threatening. The trend underscores the need for better animal control, public awareness campaigns, and timely medical intervention to reduce dog bite incidents and save lives.

Hubballi Footpaths Blocked, Pedestrians Struggle for Safety

HUBBALLI

Encroachment on Hubballi footpaths is causing danger for pedestrians. Citizens demand authorities clear roads and protect safe walking spaces for everyone.

Footpaths across Hubballi, especially along the Hubballi-Amkola National Highway, are facing serious encroachment, creating challenges for pedestrians and motorists alike. Despite repeated complaints, many areas remain blocked, forcing people to walk on busy roads, which increases the risk of accidents. Residents say the footpaths have been gradually overtaken by small businesses, vehicles, and temporary stalls. "This has become a death trap for pedestrians and even motorists. People are not aware of the dangers, and authorities are not taking action," said a local citizen.

The situation is particularly dangerous on the highway in the city's heart, which is supposed to be a two-lane road but is crowded due to improper usage and encroachment.

Citizens are urging the central and local authorities to take action to regulate traffic, remove illegal stalls, and ensure footpaths are cleared. Many argue that a proper four-lane highway or road management system is needed for smoother traffic flow and public safety.

Although RTO and local police officials occasionally visit, locals claim their efforts are not effective. People are worried that if encroachment continues, accidents will rise, and the city will lose its walking spaces.

Citizens emphasize that protecting footpaths is not just about law enforcement—it's about public safety and the right to walk safely.

Unless immediate action is taken, the growing encroachment will continue to disrupt daily life and pose serious risks for everyone traveling in Hubballi.

Property Dispute Leads to Mother, Son Kidnapping

HUBBALLI

A property dispute in Hubballi turned violent when an 86-year-old mother and her 53-year-old son were kidnapped in broad daylight. The incident occurred in the Bepari Plot area under the jurisdiction of the old Hubballi police station.

The Golda family had been involved in an ongoing property feud for several days. Tensions between siblings Ali, Mehboob, and Nizam Girial had escalated, leading to constant arguments over inheritance matters. Early Friday morning, a group of men attacked the son, Likayat, near Mehboob and Nizam's residence. They forcibly kidnapped him on a motorcycle.

During the incident, the attackers also took Hafeez B. M., the elderly mother of the family, who was staying at Likayat's house in Namtarbe Pari Plot. She had been protesting against the attack when she was taken and transported in an eco-car.

Local residents expressed shock over the boldness of the kidnapping in broad daylight. Police from the old Hubballi station have registered a case and launched an investigation into the matter. Officers are reviewing CCTV footage and questioning family members and neighbors to trace the suspects and recover the victims safely. Authorities have appealed to the public to provide any information that could assist in the investigation. Meanwhile, the Golda family continues to be embroiled in disputes over property, highlighting the risks that long-standing inheritance conflicts can pose when tensions are left unresolved.

Bangar Balya Creates Stir in Hubballi Jail

HUBBALLI

In the ongoing investigation of the Mallik murder case that occurred on November 13 near Mantoora Road, Hubballi, the main accused, Bangar Balya, along with another accused, Prajwal, caused a major disturbance at Hubballi sub-jail.

Officials reported that the accused got into a heated argument with police while being shifted from Hubballi sub-jail to Bijapur sub-jail. The situation escalated quickly, prompting the deployment of over 30 police personnel to control the scene. The accused were eventually transferred safely to Bijapur sub-jail in a police van.

The incident occurred under the jurisdiction of the Ashok Nagar police station, raising concerns about security measures during the transfer of high-risk inmates. Authorities have confirmed that no injuries were reported during the disturbance, but the drama highlighted the challenges faced by the police in handling such cases.

So far, 18 individuals have been arrested in connection with the Mallik murder case.

The investigation remains active, with police continuing to gather evidence and question witnesses.

Law enforcement officers have assured the public that all necessary precautions are being taken to ensure the safety of jail staff and inmates during transfers.

The Mallik murder case has drawn significant public attention, and the recent incident involving Bangar Balya underscores the ongoing tension surrounding the investigation.

Police have warned that strict action will be taken against anyone attempting to disrupt the law and order during the judicial process.

Bus Smashes Into Scooter, Rider Survives

HUBBALLI

A serious road accident occurred near Ambedkar Circle on Railway Station Road in Hubballi, when a city bus collided with a scooter, leaving locals shocked. Fortunately, the scooter rider survived despite the impact.

According to witnesses, the scooter was attempting to turn right when it was suddenly hit from behind by a Gadag-Hubballi city bus traveling at high speed. The scooter was crushed under the bus wheels, but the rider fell safely onto the ground and avoided severe injuries.

People nearby were stunned by the scene, as the accident could have been fatal. Passersby immediately rushed to help and ensured the rider received prompt attention.

On receiving information about the collision, the Hubballi police arrived at the spot and conducted an investigation. Officers noted the positions of the vehicles and recorded statements from witnesses to understand how the accident occurred.

Authorities have urged drivers to exercise caution in busy areas like Railway Station Road, where traffic is heavy and accidents can happen in an instant. They also reminded riders to follow traffic rules and wear safety gear to reduce risks on the road.

The bus driver is cooperating with the police inquiry. Meanwhile, the injured scooter rider has been taken for medical checkup, and police are examining CCTV footage to determine the exact cause of the crash.

Farmers Criticize District Magistrate's Lack Action

DHARWAD

Farmers in several villages of Dharwad district have expressed serious concerns over the performance of District Magistrate Divya Prabhu. They claim that she is not addressing their issues properly, while officials under her supervision, including Rai Tamukhand, are reportedly unresponsive.

The villagers say that Rai Tamukhand, who is present in the area, does not take action to resolve their problems. Instead of assisting the farmers, he is allegedly blaming them for delays and difficulties in administration.

The Mahadayi Horadada Farmers' Association has formally raised complaints against both Divya Prabhu and Rai Tamukhand. They have stated that the district administration has not been attentive to agricultural concerns and rural development issues. A letter demanding the removal of Rai Tamukhand has been sent to the Chief Minister, warning that legal action may follow if the government does not intervene.

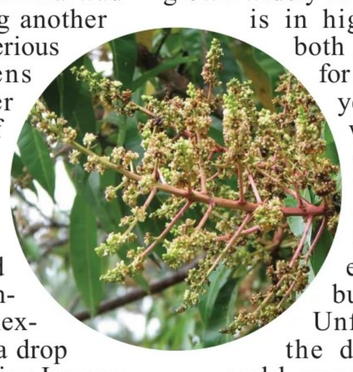
When questioned about these allegations, Divya Prabhu stated that the issues raised by the farmers were misrepresented and that departmental officers are expected to follow proper procedures under her guidance. However, farmers insist that their grievances are being ignored and that urgent action is required to improve the administrative system in rural areas.

This controversy highlights a growing distrust between villagers and district officials. The farmers have demanded accountability and are calling for reforms to ensure that their problems receive proper attention. Many in the district are now closely watching the government's response to this ongoing administrative dispute.

MANGO FARMERS FACE SEVERE CROP LOSS THREAT

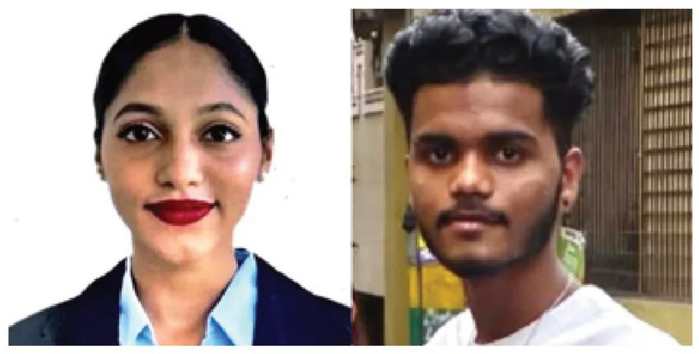
DHARWAD

Mango farmers in Dharwad district are facing another tough year as a serious disease threatens their crops. After several years of losses, farmers had hoped for a good harvest this season, as mango trees bloomed heavily in December. However, unexpected rains and a drop in temperature during January have put the flowers at risk of disease.



Mango is one of the major crops in Dharwad, and farmers invest lakhs of rupees annually to maintain their orchards. The Alphonso variety, grown widely in the district, is in high demand both locally and for export. This year, farmers were encouraged by the abundant flowering and expected a bumper crop. Unfortunately, the drizzle and cold weather have caused symptoms of disease to appear on the flowers, putting their hopes in jeopardy. Around 15,000 hectares in the district are dedicated to mango cultivation, but frequent weather problems over the past seven to eight years have repeatedly damaged yields. Many farmers have already abandoned mango farming, switching to crops like sugarcane after facing repeated losses. If the current disease spreads, more orchards may be lost, leaving growers frustrated and concerned about their future income.

Experts warn that immediate attention and proper care are needed to save the remaining flowers and minimize crop loss. Farmers remain anxious as they monitor the situation closely, hoping that this year will not repeat the pattern of disappointment.



Suicide Case Sparks Tension Between Villages

KARWAR

The suicide of a young woman from Kadra village has escalated tensions between two neighboring villages after allegations against a JDS leader's son. The ongoing dispute between the families has now spread, creating fear and anger among residents.

Richelle D'Souza, a young woman from Kadra, reportedly took her life following harassment by Chirag Kotharakar, son of former district panchayat member and local JDS leader Chaitra Kotharakar. The villagers of Kadra claim that Chirag may have sexually harassed Richelle before her death and are demanding immediate arrest and strict punishment. They held a press conference along with local Christian leaders to express their outrage and warn others against ignoring the issue.

Meanwhile, Kinnar village residents have pushed back against the accusations, stating that Richelle and Chirag had a relationship and that photos and videos show she frequently visited his house. They allege that political motives are fueling false claims and have warned that anyone spreading untrue statements will be held legally responsible. The case has turned what was a private dispute into a village-wide conflict, with both sides threatening legal action and public protests. Authorities are monitoring the situation closely, but villagers fear the tension could lead to further clashes. The tragedy highlights how personal disputes, when mixed with political and social pressures, can escalate rapidly and affect entire communities, leaving families and villagers divided and anxious about safety and justice.

STATE POLITICS UPDATE

No Political Revolution in State, Says Minister Zameer

DHARWAD

Minister Zameer Ahmed has dismissed claims of any revolution or major changes in state politics, particularly regarding the Chief Minister's post. Speaking in Dharwad, he said that rumors of a political upheaval in November were exaggerated and had no substance.

"The BJP had promised a revolution in November. I had warned them that after November, the hype would fade, and that is exactly what happened. The so-called revolution ended yesterday," he said. He clarified that the Chief Minister's position is not vacant, and no one can make changes without the approval of the high command.

Minister Zameen emphasized that only senior party leaders like Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, and Rahul Gandhi have the authority to make such decisions. "We are bound by the decisions of our high command," he said.

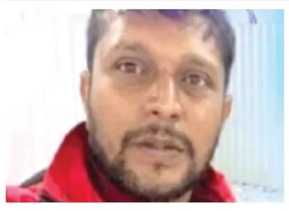
He also referred to the recent visit of the CM and DCM to Delhi, saying it followed party protocol. "Many senior leaders, including DK, George, and Mahadevappa, were present. Meeting our top leaders in Delhi is a routine practice. There is nothing unusual in this," he added.

Comparing BJP's political practices, he noted that the party frequently changed Chief Ministers between 2008 and 2013, but added that BJP still lacks a majority and depends heavily on administrative maneuvers.

Regarding DK's trip to Delhi, Minister Zameen said it was strictly for official meetings and discussions.

"It should not be interpreted in any other way. We maintain proper channels when interacting with our leaders," he concluded, emphasizing stability and discipline in the party.

QUICK READ



COCA invoked against jailed rowdy Gubbachi Seena

Bengaluru

In a major crackdown on organised crime, the Whitefield police have invoked the Karnataka Control of Organised Crime Act (COCA) against Sarjapur-based rowdy sheeter Gubbachi Seena and another rowdy, Karthik. The move comes as part of intensified efforts to curb rowdyism in the city. Despite being lodged in jail, Gubbachi Seena allegedly continued to run criminal operations from behind bars. Recently, videos and photographs showing him consuming alcohol and celebrating his birthday inside the prison went viral, raising serious questions about jail security and supervision. Police said Seena also allegedly threatened a builder over the phone while in custody, prompting the registration of a case at the Varthur police station. Citing his repeated involvement in anti-social activities and his ability to orchestrate crimes from jail, investigators booked him under COCA, which allows stricter action against organised offenders.

Rowdyism rises in Rajajinagar, women express frustration

Bengaluru

Residents of Rajajinagar, especially women, are increasingly frustrated with rising rowdyism in the area. Earlier, when Padmavathi served as corporator in Prakash Nagar, officials visited homes and addressed grievances. Now, many feel there is no one to listen to their concerns. "MLA S Suresh Kumar is a good man, but no one listens to us here," said Madhumati, a local resident, during a survey ahead of the upcoming GBA elections. The sentiment reflects widespread worry over safety and lack of effective governance in the neighbourhood.

Man and woman brawl after minor accident on Kerekodi road

Bengaluru

A minor collision between a car and a bike on Kerekodi main road around 8 pm on Thursday escalated into a scuffle between the drivers, causing traffic congestion. Both vehicles sustained mirror damage during the incident. Attempts by passing motorists to mediate failed, and a video of the fight quickly went viral, sparking public outrage. The Girinagar police have registered a case and are investigating the matter, collecting statements and details of those involved. Authorities have urged road users to remain calm and avoid letting minor accidents escalate into conflicts.

Land acquisition for Business Corridor hits roadblock

Alternate compensation schemes offered only as ex-gratia, final choice rests with farmers

BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Business Corridor (BBC) project has hit a compensation impasse as decades-old land awards clash with soaring property values. Officials say alternate schemes can only be offered as ex-gratia, with the final decision resting with farmers.

The project, earlier known as the Peripheral Ring Road, was notified in 2008-09. The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) had passed compensation awards of Rs 20-30 lakh per acre for 948 acres and 14.5 guntas, part of the first phase of 1,810 acres. However, acquisition stalled for nearly 15 years due to farmer opposition, leaving large tracts of land in limbo.

With the Congress government treating the corridor as a key decongestion initiative, land acquisition is back on the agenda. But the 2008-09 award, which cannot be legally withdrawn, has created a legal hurdle. Officials fear farmers covered under the old award may seek higher cash compensation in courts, straining project finances.

Meanwhile, land prices in areas like Varthur and Gunjur have surged, with farmers demanding Rs 15-40 crore per acre. In response, BDA has begun negotiating payouts under a new framework, offering up to Rs 15.6 crore per acre in select villages. Around 100 acres have already been acquired with farmer consent.

Farmers are being offered five options: cash, residential plots, commercial plots, Transferable Development Rights (TDR), or Floor Area Ratio (FAR). Detailed village-wise compensation details, including TDR and FAR, are published on the BDA website. Four district collectors have been appointed to fast-track acquisition once consent letters are received.

BCC Chairman LK Atheeq said the government expects most landowners to choose ex-gratia packages. Many are opting for commercial plots at a 65:35 ratio (8,385 sq ft per acre) along with TDR. A revised Detailed Project Report (DPR) is underway.

Under current rules, tenders can only be floated after 80% of land acquisition is completed. BDA has requested government approval to call tenders after reaching 60% acquisition, aiming to accelerate project development while managing compensation-related challenges.

State mulls new sandbox plan for tech startups

BENGALURU

The Karnataka IT-BT department is exploring the creation of a regulatory sandbox for startups, following amendments to Karnataka Innovation Authority (KIA) rules. The sandbox will allow innovators to test technologies under a guided framework, ensuring alignment with existing policies while also recommending changes where necessary, said IT-BT Director Rahul Shankanur. The plan is in early stages, with meetings already underway to define its scope and operational framework.

The initiative aims to prevent regulatory conflicts, such as the bike-taxi impasse, by enabling technology development to occur alongside legal compliance. Air taxis in Bengaluru, for example, are technologically market-ready but must adhere to DGCA rules and no-fly zones before commercial deployment. A proposed KIA rule amendment to enable the sandbox is expected during the budget session.

Prashanth Prakash, Chairperson of Startup Vision Group, Karnataka, highlighted the potential benefits, noting that sandboxes provide startups with the flexibility to navigate regulations while bridging gaps between policy and innovation. "Karnataka has a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem, and many innovators want to experiment here first," he said, emphasizing the importance of implementation and follow-through.

If someone wants to develop a technology for which regulations do not exist, they can experiment in this sandbox.

Industry veteran Mohandas Pai expressed caution, citing past regulatory sandboxes that stalled due to bureaucratic inertia. "A Secretary may push reforms, but once transferred, the system collapses," Pai said. He urged a cabinet-backed approach with active government engagement and a long-term vision for the sandbox.

Pai recommended that the sandbox be structured as a 10-year programme, with a two-month response window for all issues emerging from experiments. A formal review mechanism must be in place to ensure continuity, prevent lapses with government changes, and secure the sandbox as a sustainable tool for innovation in Karnataka's tech ecosystem. If implemented effectively, the sandbox could position Karnataka as a leading state for experimentation, offering startups both freedom and regulatory clarity while shaping future policies for emerging technologies.

Voter roll integrity row threatens to cloud Greater Bengaluru polls

BENGALURU

As Karnataka gears up for elections to the five Greater Bengaluru corporations by June 30, concerns over the integrity of voter lists are threatening to overshadow preparations. The state government has assured compliance with the Supreme Court directive, but the principal opposition, BJP, has raised alarm over alleged inclusion of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in the electoral rolls, particularly in Kogilu Layout.

Opposition leader in the legislative council, Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, has written to the Election Commission of India (ECI), the chief electoral officer of Karnataka, and the Union Home Minister, claiming that suspected infiltrators have obtained voter ID cards, Aadhaar, and ration cards. Narayanaswamy has demanded a National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe and a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list, warning of potential legal and political action if concerns are ignored. He alleged that nearly 20 lakh fake voters could exist within Greater Bengaluru, asserting that suspected infiltrators possess Bangladeshi driving licences and national IDs.

While the BJP insists elections should not be delayed, it maintains that the voter list can be cleaned up within a month alongside an NIA investigation. Officials note, however, that electoral roll preparation falls under the State Election Commission (SEC), while ward delimitation and reservations are the state government's responsibility. The government has completed delimitation and issued reservations, inviting public objections, after which the final notification will be issued.

The SEC has begun revising voter lists, aiming for completion by March 16. A draft list will be published on January 19, with a window for objections, additions, and deletions extending into early March. State election commissioner HS Sangreshi assured that complaints raised by BJP and others are being considered. "There is no cause for concern over the integrity of the voter list… anyone can file objections," he said.

HC directs state, Centre to halt devpt at Roerich estate

BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has directed both the state and central governments to ensure that no development activities take place on the Roerich and Devika Rani estate on the outskirts of Bengaluru. A division bench, comprising Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice CM Poonacha, issued the order on a PIL petition filed by RR Nagar I Care Trust. The next hearing in the matter is scheduled for February 16.

The petitioner challenged a December 24, 2024 notification that approved an eco-tourism and cultural hub project at the estate. The state's counsel requested time to file a statement of objections, while Deputy Solicitor General H. Shanthi Bhushan, representing the Centre, stated that no proposal regarding the project had been received and, at this stage, implementation could not proceed.

The trust argued that the proposed 450-car parking facility and visitor accommodations would severely impact the local ecology, as the estate borders the Bannerghatta forest range and lies along an elephant corridor. The petitioner highlighted that both the master plan and central eco-tourism rules mandate the protection of ecological and wildlife areas. The petition also called for scientific profiling of environmental, ecological, and wildlife factors on the estate and the preparation of a management plan consistent with conservation objectives.

Additionally, the petitioner sought that the contiguous area of the estate be declared a Biodiversity Heritage Site or considered for a conservation reserve designation to protect the remaining land.

The case has drawn attention after the tourism department moved ahead with plans for the eco-tourism hub despite forest department concerns. A recent event highlighted the risks: as part of the Creative City Bengaluru festival, the estate will host 25 artists from Russia and Austria for a two-day sketching event. Citing the presence of wild animals, the estate board requested additional forest and security personnel for the artists' safety.

Conservationists called the request ironic, noting that the same risks were downplayed when planning the larger eco-tourism project. "If extra protection is needed for a two-day event, imagine the dangers and security costs if thousands of tourists visit daily," a conservationist said, urging the government to reconsider the project to prevent threats to life and ecology.

The High Court order effectively puts all development on hold until further proceedings, underscoring the judiciary's focus on balancing heritage, conservation, and tourism interests.

Celebrate rural Karnataka at Suggi Huggi this weekend

BENGALURU

Bengalureans can immerse themselves in the vibrant culture of rural Karnataka this weekend at Suggi Huggi, a two-day festival celebrating Sankranti. The event will be held on January 17-18 at Jakkur Grounds and is organised by Revenue Minister and Byatarayanapura MLA Krishna Byre Gowda. Entry is free.

Suggi Huggi offers a rich cultural experience, blending tradition with urban sensibilities. Visitors can enjoy folk arts, cultural performances, and traditional exhibitions, while recognising the contribution of farmers to society. "The festival celebrates harvest, which is closely linked to nature," Krishna Byre Gowda said, highlighting the event's role as a cultural bridge.

The festivities kick off at 3 pm on January 17 with cultural performances and a dance contest, followed by a 6 pm concert featuring Barfi Band. Day two begins at 10 am with Rashi Puja, folk dances, village games, drawing and rangoli competitions, and traditional performances including dollu kunitha, puja kunitha, chilipili gombe, and nandi dwaja.

Attendees can shop at handicraft stalls and participate in activities such as kite-flying, bullock cart rides, kabaddi, tug of war, and pot-breaking competitions. Culinary delights will be available at the Vasavi Avarebele Mela, while festival treats like ellu-bella, sugarcane, groundnuts, and pongal will be distributed throughout the day.

The celebrations will conclude on January 18 at 6 pm with Prabhat Arts' "18 Days – Dusk of an Era", a Mahabharata dance musical, bringing mythological storytelling to life on stage. Suggi Huggi promises a lively weekend for families and communities, offering a rare opportunity to experience the sights, sounds, and tastes of rural Karnataka in the heart of Bengaluru.

'We are open to alliance with BJP in GBA local body polls'

BENGALURU

Union Minister and JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy on Friday said his party is open to exploring an alliance with the BJP for the upcoming Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) and other local body elections, while maintaining that no final decision has been taken yet.

Clarifying former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda's recent statement that there is no alliance in local body elections, Kumaraswamy said the party has kept its options open. "We are open to the issue of an alliance in GBA and local body elections. Our view is that there should be no confusion about alliances. What kind of political developments will take place in the coming days and what decision BJP leaders take at the local level will also matter. We will take a decision after assessing all these factors," he said.

ONE CITY. MANY CULTURES

Drumbeats and Unity Mark the Opening of BLR Habba 2026

BENGALURU

Bengaluru marked a colourful beginning to BLR Habba 2026 on Friday evening as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah inaugurated the festival by playing the traditional Dollu and Nagari drums on the steps of Vidhana Soudha. The iconic seat of power was transformed into a vibrant cultural stage, symbolising the festival's aim of bridging the city's global tech identity with its deep-rooted heritage.

Addressing the gathering, Siddaramaiah drew upon the teachings of Basavanna and Sufi saints, calling on citizens to uphold Manushyatva—the shared humanity that transcends caste and religion. "We are humans first. Birth is accidental and death is certain; what matters is how we live in between," he said. Stressing cultural integration, he urged Bengaluru's 1.4 crore residents to learn Kannada to better connect with the land and its people.

Organised by the Department of Kannada and Culture in collaboration with private partners, including the Unboxing BLR Foundation, BLR Habba will run for 20 days, with 10 days of major events. Secretary C J Manjunath announced that more than 150 programmes will be held across 30 locations such as Freedom Park, Malleswaram, and Whitefield. Events include Thindi Habba (food festival), Nataka Hubba (theatre), and Rasthe Hubba (street arts), featuring over 800 artistes from India and abroad.

Pongal Festival: Special train service announced

BENGALURU

In view of the surge in passenger traffic during the Pongal festival, Southern Railway has announced a one-trip special train service between Kottayam and Bengaluru Cantonment. The move aims to provide additional travel convenience to passengers heading to and from Karnataka and Kerala during the festive season.

Train No. 06147 Kottayam–Bengaluru Cantonment Special Express will depart from Kottayam at 12.30 am on January 18 and arrive at Bengaluru Cantonment at 3.30 am on January 19. For the return journey, Train No. 06148 Bengaluru Cantonment–Kottayam Special Express will leave Bengaluru Cantonment at 10.20 pm on January 19 and reach Kottayam at 10.50 am on January 20. The special express will have stoppages at Ernakulam Town, Aluva, Thrissur, Palakkad, Podanur, Tiruppur, Erode, Salem, Kuppam, Bangarpet and Krishnarajapuram stations in both directions, Southern Railway said.

QUICK READ

One-Day workshop organized for MSME entrepreneurs

CHIKKABALLAPUR

A one-day awareness workshop for MSME entrepreneurs under the RAMP scheme will be held on January 17 at 10:30 am at Stree Shakti Bhavan, behind Saraswati School, Shidlaghatta Town. The workshop will focus on Business Development Service Providers (BDSPs) and aims to help local entrepreneurs enhance their skills and business opportunities. MSME entrepreneurs in the district are encouraged to participate and benefit from the program. For further details, participants can contact the Joint Director of the District Industries Centre, Chikkaballapur, at 08156-273303. Officials emphasized that the session will provide practical guidance and valuable insights for small businesses.

Special registration drive for unorganized workers

Eligible participants include home-based, street, domestic, and manual workers across sectors like construction

CHIKKABALLAPUR

The Labour Department has launched a special registration drive for unorganized workers in the district under the Pradhan Mantri Shramyogi Maan-Dhan (PMSYM) Pension Scheme. The drive, running from January 15 to March 15, aims to provide social security and financial support to workers in the unorganized sector.

Eligible participants include home-based workers, street vendors, domestic workers, hot meal preparers, porters, brick kiln workers, shoemakers, rag pickers, weavers, rickshaw pullers, landless laborers, mechanics, fishermen, agricultural and construction workers, beedi and handloom workers, leather workers, blacksmiths, tailors, audiovisual workers, and NREGA workers.

Under the scheme, the Central Government contributes to the pension account alongside the subscriber. Beneficiaries will receive a guaranteed minimum monthly pension of Rs. 3,000 after turning 60. Workers must be between 18 and 40 years old, earn up to Rs. 15,000 per month, and not be covered under ESI, PF, or NPS. They should also have a bank account and Aadhaar number.

Workers can register at the nearest Common Service Center by submitting their initial contribution, Aadhaar card, bank details, nominee information, and a mobile number.

District Labour Officer Shabana Azmi urged all eligible unorganized workers to take advantage of this scheme and secure financial stability for their future. The drive is expected to benefit thousands of workers in the district and strengthen social security coverage for the unorganized sector.

RTA approves vehicle billboards in Chitradurga

CHITRADURGA

The Regional Transport Authority (RTA) meeting held on Friday at the District Collector's Office Hall approved the installation of billboards on vehicles, including those of the Chitradurga Regional Oilseed Growers Cooperative Union, for advertising their products. The meeting was chaired by Deputy Commissioner T. Venkatesh. A total of 56 agenda items were discussed during the session, three of which related to requests from cooperative unions and private companies to display advertisements on their vehicles. The RTA approved the proposals and decided a fee of Rs. 750 for medium-class vehicles and Rs. 2,000 for heavy goods vehicles. The meeting also addressed 19 road transfer matters, including 16 general transfers and three posthumous transfers. The authority listened to the arguments of lawyers representing vehicle owners and approved the requests.

In addition, 33 road concession issues were examined. Fifteen of these involved road expansion or reduction matters. Lawyers representing Majalu Vahana concession holders were given time until January 31 to submit their written documents, after which each case will be decided according to the law. The Secretary was instructed to schedule hearings for 17 other concession matters and examine requests from private promoters before taking action. One concession holder requested withdrawal of their application, which was approved by the RTA. The meeting also granted posthumous transfer authority to the RTA Secretary under the Karnataka Motor Vehicle Rules, following a request from the Private Bus Owners Association. The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner T. Venkatesh, District Superintendent of Police Ranjith Kumar Bandaru, Regional Transport Officers, Secretary Bharath M. Kalisinghe, RTO Superintendent C.D. Hemanth Kumar, bus association representatives, High Court lawyers, and KSRTC legal officers.

Madiwala Machideva Jayanti to be celebrated on February 1

CHITRADURGA

Preparations are underway to celebrate Madiwala Machideva Jayanti on February 1 in a simple yet meaningful manner, officials said on Friday. The event will be organized jointly by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Kannada and Culture Department, and Chitradurga Municipal Corporation. Deputy Divisional Officer Venkatesh Naik, presiding over a preliminary planning meeting at the Sub-Divisional Officer's office hall, said the Jayanti aims to honor the life and teachings of Madiwala Machideva while promoting cultural awareness among residents. The program will begin at 11 a.m. at the District Collector's office hall. Dr. Prof. Mahantesh will deliver a special lecture on Madiwala Machideva, highlighting his contributions and legacy.

Shri Guru Siddharth Meswar remembered for shaping society

TUMAKURU : Shri Guru Siddharth Meswar was not just an individual, but a powerful force in shaping society, said Sub-District Magistrate Nahida Jamjam during a birth anniversary function held in his honor. The event was organized jointly by the District Magistrate, Zilla Panchayat, Mahanagara Palike, Kannada and Sanskrit Department, and all Sangh Sansthans of the Bhovi Samaj in the district. It celebrated the life, teachings, and public service of Siddharth Meswar, emphasizing his dedication to social equality, hard work, and community welfare. Nahida Jamjam highlighted that Meswar's life embodied the principle of discipline and effort. "He showed how society can improve when we believe in God and follow righteous values," she said, urging today's youth to adopt his ideals and lead value-based, hardworking lives. Siddalingappa, President of the Kannada Sahitya Parishad, said the event's purpose was to inspire the younger generation to follow Meswar's vision. He spoke about Meswar's lifelong service to neglected workers, his efforts to provide basic facilities like lakes, wells, and buildings, and his focus on fairness and social justice.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, AMIT KHALIFA S/o CHANDAN KHALIFA R/o N0-22, 1st Floor, Balaji layout, 5th Main Road, Anandnagar, Bangalore, Karnataka-560032, Permanant Address: Pipra, Damodarpur, Chakia Pipra, East Champaran, Bihar-845416, have changed the name of my minor daughter SHAFAQ ZOHRA aged 10 years and she shall hereafter be known as NAIRA ARIYAN.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SUSHMA K V W/o KANIYAR RAMASWAMY SRINIDHI, R/o 2306, 21st Cross, Near Shastry Bakery K R Road, BSK 2nd Stage, Bidarahalli, Bangalore South, Bangalore, Karnataka-560070, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as KERALAPURA VENUGOPAL SUSHMA.

NAME CHANGE

I, **RIZWAN BASHA SUBHAN**, resident of # 23, A 5th Cross, 1st Main Road, Valmikinagar, Mysore Road, Bangalore-560 026, have changed my name to **RIZWAN BASHA**, vide affidavit dated: 13.01.2026, before Notary N.NAGAPPA, Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Manjunatha J** S/o Jayaramappa, aged about 44 years, residing at Patrenahalli Village, & Post, Nandi Hobli, Chickballapur Taluk & District. I have Changed my Son's name from **P.M. HARSHITH GOWDA** TO **HEMHAN KUMAR GOWDA P.M** for all the purposes vide affidavit dated 14/01/2026 sworn before K H Venkatappa, Advocate & Notary, Chickballapura

CH CLASSIFIEDS

To place a classified ad contact: **080-41209042**

AFFIDAVIT

I, **SRI NATARAJ**, aged about 52 years, son of late **NANJUNDAPPA**, residing at No. 819, Ward No. 15, behind KEB, Dasara Beedi, Devanahalli Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District – 562110, That I am a permanent resident of the above-mentioned address. That my Aadhaar number is 2769 0774 5219, and in my School Transfer Certificate, Bank Passbook, PAN Card, and Passport, my name is recorded as **Nataraj (Nataraj) @ Nataraja (Nataraja)**. That the signatures appearing on my PAN Card and Passport belong to me, and both the above-mentioned names refer to one and the same person, that is myself. I solemnly affirm that the contents of this affidavit are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. Solemnly affirmed and signed before Advocate **H. PRAKASH** at Devanahalli on this 08th day of January 2026.

BENGALURU NORTH CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer, Yelahanka Zone-2, Dasarahalli Division, MEI Layout, Hesaraghatta Main Road, Bagalagunte, T. Dasarahalli, Bengaluru - 560073.

No: BNCC/EE/DD/TEND/03/2025-26 Date: 16-01-2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Two Cover System) (Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal only)

The Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, Yelahanka Zone-2, BNCC, Bengaluru invites tenders from registred Agencies for the Services detailed below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Service
1	Operation, Supervision and Maintenance of Mens and Womens Gym Building (2nd and 3rd Floor) in Ward No. 17, J.P. Park, Rajarajeshwarinagara Constituency. **EMD Amount (in Rs.): 97,800/-**

Calendar of Events: 1) Tender Documents may be Downloaded from the GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in from 21-01-2026 onwards. 2)** Last Date and Time for Tender Queries: **26-01-2026 upto 4.00 PM. 3)** Date of Pre Bid Meeting: **27-01-2026 at 3.00 PM. in the Office of the Chief Engineer, Yelahanka Zone-2. 4)** Last Date for Submission of Tender Document: **31-01-2026 upto 4.00 PM. 5)** Date of Opening of Technical Bid: **02-02-2026 at 11.00 AM. 6)** Date of Opening of Financial Bid: **Will be intimated to the Technically Qualified Bidders.** Further details can be had from the above office.

Sd/- Executive Engineer
Dasarahalli Division, Yelahanka Zone-2, BNCC.

BANGALURU URBAN ZILLA PANCHAYATH
Executive Engineer, Panchayath Raj Engineering Division
1st Floor, Zilla Panchayat Buidling, S. Kariyappa Road
Banashankari (Near Banashankari Temple), Bangalore-560070

No.EE/PRED/BNG(U)/TND/AE-1/34/2025-26 Dated: 13.01.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION (through KPPP Portal only) (SINGLE COVER SYSTEM)

Tenders are invited through KPPP Portal by the Executive Engineer, P.R.E.D. Bangalore Urban, For **PMSHRI Grants** Works. The work details can obtained from the KPPP Website The Tender Documents can be obtained and submitted on or before **Dated: 30.01.2026 upto 4.00 pm.** Further details can be obtained from web site at **http://www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in** or contact this office during office working hours.

Sd/- **Executive Engineer**
Panchayath Raj Engineering Division
Bangalore Urban Dist.,Bangalore.

DIPR/CP/5057/SA/2025-26

Rural Drinking Water & Sanitation Division
Office of the Executive Engineer, RDWS&SD, Panchayath Bhavan, 3rd Floor, Ramanagara Division, Bengaluru South District - 562 159.
E-mail : eerdwsdrmgr2017@gmail.com

Tender Notification No. : 08/E.E./R.D.W.S. & S.D./RMG/ Tender/JE/OS/1857/2025-26 Date : 16-01-2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION

The Rural Water Supply And Sanitation Division Ramanagara is inviting on behalf of Governor of Kamataka State invites Tenders from eligible tenderers, for the works details below as per **Standard Bid Document. Two Cover Tender** procedure as per Rule 28 of the KTPP act shall be followed. The Tenders are required to be Submitted through E-Procurement mode through **E-portal https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in. Providing Man Power Services on Outsource basis for Rural Drinking Water Supply & Sanitation Division & Sub-Divisions in Bengaluru South District.** Schedule is given below.

1) Amount put to Tender Rs. 72.96 Lakhs, E.M.D. : Rs. 1,46,000.00/-, 2) Period of Contract : 12 Months, 3) Last Date for Submission of Tender : 31-01-2022 Upto 5.30 p.m., 4) Opening of Technical Bid of the Tender : 02-02-2026 at 11.00 a.m. Onwards. 5) Opening of Financial Bid of the Tender : 04-01-2026 at 11.00 a.m. Onwards.

For further particulars details may avail from the office of the undersigned during office hours on all working days and may visit the **Website : https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
R.D.W. & S. Department, Ramanagara Division,
Bengaluru South District.

DIPR/Ramanagar/572/Manipal/2025-26

Town Municipal Council Chikodi

SL:TMC:CKD:CMIDP:2025-26 Date:14.01.2026

Town Municipal Council Chikodi (KPP Portal) Tender notification 3nd call

Town Municipal Council Chikodi invites tender for Civil license contractors in KW- -2 and KW-3 Document for work under CMIDP Grant 1) Indent No 54005 Rs. 56.00 lakh (CAT-I), 2) Indent No 54034 Rs. 57.00 lakh (SC), 3) Indent No 54040 Rs. 67.00 lakh (CAT-II(A), 4) Indent No 54048 Rs. 64.00 lakh (SC), 5) Indent No 54049 Rs. 54.00 lakh (Others), 6) Indent No 54051 Rs. 50.00 lakh (Others), 7) Indent No 54052 Rs. 85.30 lakh (ST), 8) Indent No 54054 Rs. 63.00 lakh (Others), 9) Indent No 54055 Rs. 21.00 lakh (Others). Work period 3 month.

Sl. No:1Last Date & Time for Tender document download:14.01.2026, Sl. No :2Last Date & Time for receipt of tenders:29.01.2026 @ 4.00 PM, Sl. No :3Date & Time for Opening of Technical Bid:31.01.2026 @ 4.00 PM, Sl. No :4: Date & Time for Opening of Financial Bid:02.02.2026 @ 11.00 AM, Sl. No :5:Number of days to extend:2 Days.

Above tender work details are in available KPPP website www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in and TMC website www.chikoditown.mrc.gov.in.

Sd/-Chief Officer
TMC Chikodi

DIPR/BGM/RO-NO-1644/KSMCA/2025-26

BANGALORE WEST CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer, Malleshwaram Division, 2nd cross, Jaladarshini Layout, MSR Nagar, Mathikere, Bangalore-560 054. Ph: 080-22975610

No:EE/MLM/ Kppp /12/2025-26 Date: 16-01-2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through GOK e–Procurement Portal Only) (Single Cover & Two Cover)

Tender for the following work on item rate basis are invited as Standard Bid Documents KW-1, 2, 3 & 4 by the Executive Engineer Malleshwaram Division on behalf of the Commissioner, BWCC from the registered contractors of Bangalore West City Corporation or equivalent registration with BBMP/ CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES or any State Government Organizations may apply through e-procurement portal as per schedule of events. The Tender Document can be downloaded from the GOK e-Procurement Website **(https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in)** on payment of prescribed fee (Non-Refundable) as prescribed by E-Procurement Portal (Including Vat) in the form of e-Payment through e-Procurement Platform. The Tenderer should accompany a copy of the valid Registration Certificate and shall be submitted through e-Procurement Portal Only.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work/Estimate Cost in lakhs/Amount Put to tender/EMD amount in Rs./Category
	Single Cover System
1	Repairs and Maintenance to BBMP Existing open Gym and Childen Equiment in Ward NO.58(65) Kadumalleshwara. CALL-2. Est Cost : **Rs.5.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **4.11 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 5,200/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **60 days,** Category : **CAT-II(A).**
2	Upgradation of Executive Engineer, BBMP Office at Jaladarshini layout in ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : **Rs.10.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **8.53 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 10,700/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **120 days,** Category : **CAT-II(A).**
3	Maintenance of BBMP Building in Mathikere Sub Division. Est Cost : **Rs.12.50 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **10.31 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 12,900/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **365 days.** Category : **SC.**
4	Maintenance of All Zonal building pertaining to Malleshwaram Sub Division. Est Cost : **Rs.12.50 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **10.95 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs.27,400/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **365 days**, Category : **Others.**
5	Upgradation of Mathikere sub division office BBMP building at Nethaji circle in ward No:54(old 36) Mathikere. Est Cost : **Rs.15.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **13.29 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 16,700/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **120 days,** Category : **ST.**
6	Comprehensive development like Waterproofing of roof, Painting, repairs to all the toilets and other civil allied works for BBMP Quarters ward No 55 (old-45), Malleshwaram. Est Cost : **Rs.15.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **12.29 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 30,800/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **90 days,** Category : **Others.**
7	Comprehensive development like Waterproofing of roof, Painting, repairs to all the toilets and other civil allied works Dri Rama Krishna Hegde BBMP Complex in ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : **Rs.15.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **12.28 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 15,400/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **90 days,** Category : **CAT-II(A).**
8	Comprehensive development like Waterproofing of roof, Painting, repairs to all the toilets and other civil allied works for BBMP Building at Subedarpalya & other civil allied works in ward No 55 (old-45), Malleshwaram. Est Cost : **Rs.20.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **16.40 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 41,000/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **90 days,** Category : **Others.**
9	Providing additional Open Gym Equipments and 8th main and other civil works in ward No 55, (Old - 45), Malleshwaram. Est Cost : **Rs.20.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **19.12 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 47,800/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **90 days,** Category : **Others.**
10	Comprehensive Development like providing concrete bed for basket ball court and other civil allied works at Poorna Prajna in ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : **Rs.20.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **16.36 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 20,500/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **90 days,** Category : **SC.**

Calendar of events for single cover system:
1. Tender documents may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal : **From 23-01-2026 16.30 Hrs onwards. 2.** Last Date & Time for uploading tender documents : **On 06-02-2026 upto 16:00 Hrs. 3)** Opening of tender : **On 09-02-2026 at 11.00 Hrs.**

Sl. No.	Name of the Work/Estimate Cost in lakhs/Amount Put to tender/EMD amount in Rs./Category
	Two cover system
11	Comprehensive development like providing open gym equipment and other civil allied works to Triangle Park RMV 2nd stage ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : **Rs.25.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **23.49 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 58,800/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **90 days,** Category : **Others.**
12	Comprehensive Development of public place near New BEL Road & other civil allied works in Ward No-54 (old-36), Mathikere. Est Cost : **Rs.35.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **28.78 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs.36,000/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **90 days,** Category : **CAT-II(A).**
13	Comprehensive Development like providing Children equipment, benches and other civil allied works at 13th A Main road Malleshwaram in ward No 55 (old-45), Malleshwaram. Est Cost : **Rs.35.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **30.68 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 38,400/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **90 days,** Category : **SC.**
14	Comprehensive development like providing open gym equipment and other civil allied works to Basavana park ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : **Rs.35.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **32.93 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 41,200/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **90 days,** Category : **CAT-II(A).**
15	Comprehensive Development like Retaining wall come side drain, grill work, benches, shelter for gazebo, resetting of pavers, painting and other civil allied work to East west park in ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : **Rs.40.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **33.12 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 82,800/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **60 days,** Category : **Others.**
16	Comprehensive Development works at Malleshwaram and surrounding area in ward No 58(65) Kadumalleshwara. Est Cost : **Rs.40.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **32.79 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 41,000/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **90 days,** Category : **CAT-II(A).**
17	Comprehensive development like providing Indoor Gym Equipment, flooring for basement room, all round rain water Channels and other civil allied works at Beagles in ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : **Rs.70.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **66.84 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 83,600/-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **90 days,** Category : **CAT-II(A).**
18	Maintenance and repairs to BBMP building at parsi garden and Bangalore One office in Ward No-57(64). Est Cost : **Rs.155.00 Lakhs,** Amount Put to Tender : **127.70 Lakhs**, EMD : **Rs. 2,00,000-.** Stipulated Period of Completion : **270 days,** Category : **Others.**

Calendar of events for Two cover system:
1. Tender documents may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal : **From 23-01-2026 16.30 Hrs onwards. 2.** Pre-Bid Meeting : **On 30-01-2026 at 16.00 Hrs. 3.** Last Date & Time for uploading tender documents : **On 06-02-2026 upto 16:00 Hrs. 4.** Opening of technical document : **On 09-02-2026 at 11.00 Hrs. 5.** Financial opening : **Opening date will be intimated through KPP Portal.**

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Malleshwaram Division, Zone-2, Bangalore West City Corporation.

QUICK READ

J&K Crime Branch files charge sheet against two K'taka residents

Srinagar

Jammu and Kashmir Crime Branch said on Friday that it has filed a charge sheet in the court of law against two residents of Karnataka for duping a local of Rs 13 lakh on the pretext of providing an MBBS seat to his son. A statement by the Crime Branch Kashmir said, The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Crime Branch Kashmir has filed a charge sheet against two Karnataka residents for duping a man of Rs 13 lakh on the pretext of providing MBBS admission to his son.

Hot-air balloon festival begins

Hyderabad

Colourful hot-air balloons dotted Hyderabad skies as the three-day festival kicked off on Friday, marking a new chapter in Telangana's tourism sector. State Tourism and Culture Minister Jupally Krishna Rao inaugurated the Festival near the historic Golconda Fort at the Golf Club. He later undertook a hot air balloon ride as part of the opening celebrations. The Minister spent nearly one-and-a-half hours in the air, covering a distance of about 13 kilometres. The ride began near the Golconda Golf Club and concluded at the outskirts of Appajiguda, offering sweeping aerial views of Hyderabad and its surrounding landscapes.

Youth stabbed to death

New Delhi

A 21-year-old man was stabbed to death on Sindhu Farm Road in the Jaitpur police station area of southeast Delhi, said police on Friday. The deceased has been identified as Krishna Sahu, a resident of Shukra Bazar Road, Hari Nagar Extension. Officers and staff of Jaitpur Police Station have apprehended two individuals, including one juvenile, in connection with the violent stabbing incident that occurred late on Thursday night (January 15), resulting in the death of one person and injuries to two others. According to police, a PCR call was received at around 11.18 p.m. on January 15 regarding a physical assault at Dharamshala Road, Jaitpur.

Assam CM Biswa Sarma Slams Cong Over Neglect of Martyrs

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma accused Congress of neglecting Assam Movement martyrs while asserting historic injustice corrected

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday launched a scathing attack on the Indian National Congress, accusing the party of denying due honour to the martyrs of the historic Assam Movement for decades. Addressing the issue with strong words, Sarma said those who laid down their lives for Aai Asomi and fought to protect Assam's identity, land and rights were systematically ignored by successive Congress-led governments. According to him, the sacrifice of these martyrs formed the backbone of modern Assam's political and social consciousness, yet they were deprived of the dignity and recognition they rightfully deserved.

The Chief Minister asserted that the present government has corrected this long-standing historical injustice by formally recognising and institutionalising the legacy of the movement's heroes. He reiterated that remembrance of the Assam Movement should go beyond symbolic gestures, stressing that true respect lies in acknowledging the sacrifices that reshaped the state's future. They made the ultimate sacrifice for Assam, but they were forgotten for years. That chapter is now being restored with honour, Sarma said.

Highlighting the significance of the newly unveiled Swahid Smarak Kshetra in Guwahati, Sarma described the memorial as a landmark moment in Assam's history. He said the grand structure stands as a permanent symbol of gratitude from both the people and the state, marking a decisive shift in how the martyrs of the Assam Movement are remembered officially.

The occasion, Sarma noted, gained national importance with Narendra Modi paying tributes at the memorial. He termed the Prime Minister's homage as a powerful signal that the martyrs of Assam are not only regional heroes but belong to the entire nation. It was a moment of national acknowledgement, and it sent a clear message that Assam's sacrifices are India's sacrifices, he said.

CPI(M) in Kerala faces fresh internal unrest as dissent and desertions emerge during a crucial leadership meeting

CPI(M) Faces Internal Strain in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) in Kerala is confronting renewed signs of internal strain at a politically sensitive juncture, with reports of dissent and desertions surfacing even as the party's crucial Central Committee meeting got underway on Friday. The developments have come at a time when the ruling party is grappling with a series of electoral setbacks and preparing for the upcoming Assembly elections, intensifying scrutiny of its internal cohesion.

In recent months, the CPI(M) has suffered successive reverses, beginning with disappointing results in the Lok Sabha elections, followed by defeats in Assembly by-elections and local body polls. These losses have fueled speculation about growing unease within the party's otherwise tightly disciplined cadre base, traditionally known for its ideological unity and organisational strength.

The first visible sign of discontent emerged when three-time former legislator Aiysha Potty publicly criticised the party leadership. Her remarks triggered broader discussions within political circles about simmering differences and dissatisfaction among sections of the party rank and file.

The situation appeared to escalate further on Friday with the announcement by senior CPI(M) leader A.V. Jayan that he was quitting the party in Wayanad. Jayan said prevailing circumstances within the organisation had made it impossible for him to continue. He alleged that a particular faction had been targeting him since the district conference, subjecting him to what he described as a sustained witch-hunt.

Jayan, who claimed to have devoted 35 years of his life entirely to the CPI(M), said decision-making within the party was increasingly being driven by intimidation rather than collective discussion and democratic debate. He further alleged that certain individuals had leaked internal information to leaders of the Indian National Congress in an attempt to isolate and target him. Such planned subversions, hewarned, would not serve the long-term interests of the CPI(M).

BJP Urges ECI to Act Firmly on BDO Office Vandalism Cases

KOLKATA

The BJP on Friday said that the vandalism that occurred at the offices of the block development officers (BDOs) in two districts of West Bengal on January 14-15 necessitates decisive action from the Election Commission of India (ECI). At the same time, the West Bengal unit of the party has claimed that the ECI should ensure that Form-7 applications (deletion of names of voters) are submitted without resistance at the hearing centers on claims and objections on the draft voters' list, the deadline for which has been extended for five states to January 19 for three sates namely Rajasthan, Goa and West Bengal and two union territories Lakshadweep and Puducherry. After a hearing centre at Farakka in the minority-dominated Murshidabad district was vandalised on Wednesday, a similar attack was repeated in a hearing centre at Chakulia in North Dinajpur district on Thursday.

Govt Extends Export Incentives to Postal Shipments

NEW DELHI

In a significant move to bolster India's e-commerce ecosystem and empower micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the government on Friday announced the extension of export incentives to postal shipments with effect from January 15. The decision is expected to widen market access for small exporters and enhance India's competitiveness in cross-border e-commerce.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said export-related benefits under the Duty Drawback, Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP), and Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL) schemes will now be available for exports made through the postal route in electronic form. Until now, exporters using postal channels did not enjoy the same level of incentives as those exporting through other modes.

According to the Finance Ministry, the move is designed to create a level playing field for exporters and promote an inclusive export ecosystem. This landmark measure aims to provide a level playing field for exporters using the postal channel and to create a conducive and inclusive ecosystem for the growth of cross-border e-commerce, the ministry said in a statement. It added that the initiative is expected to significantly enhance the competitiveness of MSME exporters, particularly those located in smaller towns and remote areas, while giving a major boost to postal exports.

India currently has 28 Foreign Post Offices (FPOs) notified under Section 7 of the Customs Act, 1962, which play a crucial role in handling international postal exports and imports. Over the years, CBIC has undertaken a series of reforms to strengthen cross-border trade through postal and courier modes.

A key milestone in this direction was the introduction of the Postal Export (Electronic Declaration and Processing) Regulations, 2022, which enabled end-to-end electronic processing of export declarations for postal shipments.

ECI VOTE THEFT

Rahul Gandhi Targets EC Over 'Vote Theft' Claims

NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday launched a sharp attack on the Election Commission of India, accusing it of eroding public trust in democracy by allegedly facilitating vote theft. The allegation echoed the Indian National Congress party's long-standing claims questioning the credibility of the poll panel.

Rahul Gandhi's remarks came moments after the counting of votes began for 29 civic body elections in Maharashtra, including the high-stakes Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections. The timing of his criticism was seen by the ruling party as an attempt to reinforce the opposition's narrative of voter fraud in the municipal polls. A day earlier, the Thackeray cousins had also raised allegations of election irregularities, questioning the effectiveness of indelible ink used to mark voters.

Taking to X on Friday morning, Rahul Gandhi wrote, Election Commission gaslighting citizens is how trust has collapsed in our democracy. Vote Chori is an anti-national act. The post intensified the political slugfest at a crucial juncture when early counting trends were beginning to emerge across Maharashtra.

The Bharatiya Janata Party responded swiftly and aggressively, dismissing the allegations as baseless and politically motivated. BJP leaders argued that the opposition was attempting to pre-emptively discredit the election process in anticipation of defeat. According to them, instead of accepting the mandate of the people, the Congress and its allies were seeking to make the Election Commission a scapegoat.

BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawala labelled the opposition a bahana brigade, accusing Rahul Gandhi of trying to discredit institutions. Accepting defeat before counting ends? Rahul is back to doing what he does best — discredit, distort and disinform, he said, adding that while concerns over ink deserved examination, no concrete case of fraud had been reported during Thursday's polling.

Another BJP leader, Pradeep Bhandari, alleged that what he termed a 'parivarvadi' party was attempting to evade accountability by fabricating narratives. In a post on X, he claimed that such allegations repeatedly collapse both in courts of law and in public opinion.

MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE LIMITED
FORMERLY MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE PVT LTD
CIN : U65923KL2010PLC039179
Regd Office: IV/470A (OLD) W/638A (NEW) Manappuram House Valapad Thrissur, Kerala 680567
Corp Office: Manappuram Home Finance Limited, Third Floor, Unit No. 301 to 315, A Wing, 'Kanakia Wall Street', Andheri-Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai-400093, Maharashtra.
Phone No.: 022-66211000, **Website:** www.manappuramhomefin.com

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the authorised officer of **Manappuram Home Finance Ltd ("MAHOFIN")** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest *[Act], 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 9 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a **Demand Notice** calling upon the borrowers and co-borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the notice and Interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **Symbolic** possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said *[Act] read with rule 9 of the said rules. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Manappuram Home Finance Ltd as mentioned below for each of the respective properties:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower and Co-borrower / Loan account number/ Branch	Description Of Secured Asset In Respect Of Which Interest Has Been Created	Date of Demand Notice sent & Outstanding Amount	Date of Possession
1	Manjula G, Dhanush M, **/MLAP00340333423/** Mysore	All That Piece & Parcel of The Property Bearing No. 183, Unique No. 152200100100400203, Alanahalli (V) And Gp Hd Kote, Mysore (D), Karnataka - 570026 Total Admeasuring 31.21 Sq Mts. East-House of Nanjundaya, West-House of Kamaladhamma, South-Road, North-House of Sidlingaya	14-10-2025 & Rs.289472/-	13-01-2026
2	Jayanna K, Lakshmma J, Harisha J, **/NHL00900014051/** Vivekananda Circle	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing No.96A/120, P.I.D. No. 152200202207700128, Situated At Hosavaranchi Village, Uyigondanahalli Grama Panchayath, Hunsuru Taluk, Mysuru District, Karnataka - 571189 Measuring Totally 222.96 Square Meters. East-Road, West-House Belongs To Madeva, South-Road, North-House Belongs To Thammaiah	14-10-2025 & Rs.615591/-	13-01-2026
3	Reshma H, Barkath Ulla A, Abdul Afees Ulla M, **/NLAP0093011764/** Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Residential Building Bearing Grama Panchayath Khatha No.332/1 And E-Khatha No. 152500502901600407 Measuring East To West : 16. 764 Mtrs And North To South : 10.0584 Mtrs Is Situated At Gondihalli Village, Puravara Hobli, Madhugiri Taluk, Tumkur District, Karnataka - 572175. East-House Belongs To Rangashamaiah., West- Road And After Land Belongs To Rangashamaiah, South-Site Belongs To Chikkanagappa.., North-Road	14-10-2025 & Rs.698701/-	13-01-2026
4	Rangaiah G, Ramesh R, Rajamma R, Siddaraju P, **/NHL00340012036/** Mysore	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing No.187, P.I.D.No.150800200400320063, Situated At Ranganathapura Village, Nitre Grama Panchayath, Gundlupete Taluk, Chamarajangara District, Karnataka - 571109 Measuring Total 67. 64 Square Meters. East-House Belongs To Papanna., West-House Belongs To Sushmitha, South-Road, North-House Belongs To Ravi	14-10-2025 & Rs.563963/-	13-01-2026
5	Mahesh P, Dileep M, Gowramma M, **/NHL00900009896/** Vivekananda Circle	All That Piece And Parcel of Property Bearing Shivapura Gramapanchayathi Khatha No. 323/11/A And As Per Form No. 11 B Unique No. 150800103100220824 Situated At Uthuvalli Village, Chamarajanagara Taluk, Karnataka - 571313 Measuring East To West: 4.572 Meters And North To South: 13.7160 Meters. East-Site of Shivaiah And Mallesh, West-Road, South-House of Kalamadiah Son of Nanjundaiah, North-Road	14-10-2025 & Rs.595912/-	13-01-2026
6	Yathish M, Mahadevappa P, Nanjamani D, Prathipa Y M, **/NHL00340009026/** Mysore	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing No.89, P.I.D. No.152100100100600098, Situated At Yaladahalli Village, Ikanahalli Grama Panchayath, Krishnarajapete Taluk And Mandya District, Karnataka -571423 Total Measuring 216.55 Square Meters. East-Site Belongs To Mahadevappa, West-Conservancy And House Belongs To Manjunath., South-Conservancy And House Belongs To Patel Annaiah, North-Road	14-10-2025 & Rs.720620/-	13-01-2026
7	Sandeep Maruti Bhatkande, Reshma Sandeep Bhatkande, Maruti Hiramani Bhatkande, Kalpana Maruti Bhatkande, **/NLAP0098007144/** Belgaum	Residential Property Bearing Gp No: 709, Measuring Total 1680 Sq Fts Situated At Ambewadi, Within The Local Limits of Gram Panchayat Ambewadi, And Within The Local Jurisdiction of Sub-Registrar Belagavi Tal & Dist Belagavi, Karnataka - 591108. East-Panchayat Road, West-Property of Tanaji Bhatkande, South-Road, North-Property of Ramesh Dhaklu Khatkar	14-10-2025 & Rs.728736/-	13-01-2026
8	Vanajakshi R, Lokesh A, **/MHL00480007216/** Davangare	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property No 761/3, E/Swathu No. 151200200800120714, Measuring 89.74 Sq Mts, Situated At Kadajji Village, Kadajji Gram Panchayath, Davangere, Karnataka - 577589. East-Conservancy, West-12 Feet Road, South Property of Ningappa, North-Property of Sureshappa	14-10-2025 & Rs.611704/-	13-01-2026
9	Mahesh B B, Nandini M, Bharathi B, **/NHL00900007234/** Vivekananda Circle	All That Piece And Parcel of Property Bearing Dasanuru Gramapanchayathi Property No. 173/173 And As Per Form No. 11 B Unique No. 152200516181020255 Situated At Doddahomma Village, Nanjanagudu Taluk, Karnataka - 571316 Measuring East To West: 9.144 Meters And North To South: 12.192 Meters. East House of Jayamma, West-Road, South-House of Chowdamma And Site of Marisiddashetty, North-Road	14-10-2025 & Rs.775028/-	13-01-2026
10	Amjad Khan, Sameena Banu, Afroz Khan, **/NHL00480005899/** Davangare	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property No 9, E Swathu No. 151200103300103179 Measuring 4.572 X 15.2439 Mtrs I.e 69.70 Sq Mtrs, Situated At Nallur Village Nallur Gram Panchayath Channagiri Taluk Davangere, Karnataka - 577221. East-House of Ashraf Unnisa, West-Site No 9/P, South-Land of Bread Bashir, North-Panchayath Road	14-10-2025 & Rs.678727/-	13-01-2026
11	Lokesh K G, Sushila K, Santhosh C, **/NHL00340006017/** Mysore	All That Piece And Parcel of Property Bearing D.M.G. Halli Gramapanchayathi Property No. 286/177/177/1 And As Per Form No. 11 B Unique No. 152200428139020121 Situated At Kamarahalli Village, Mysuru Taluk, Karnataka - 570026 Measuring East To West: 7.92 Meters And North To South: 7.92 Meters. East-House of Chikkanna Son of Chamundaiah, West-Remaining Own Property, South-5 Feet Road And Remaining Own Property, North-Land Of Boregowda	14-10-2025 & Rs.871143/-	13-01-2026
12	Ratnamma B, Halaswamy B M, **/MHL00480001278/** Davangare	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property No. 185/2P, E Swathu No. 151200301500300297, Measuring As East To West 44.50 Mts And North To South 5.03 Mts, Situated At Nandigavi Village, Nandigavi Gram Panchayath, Harihar Karnataka - 577516. East-Government Road, West- Kana of S. K. Rajkumar, South-Property of B. M. Shivayogi, North-House of B. M. Mallaiah	14-10-2025 & Rs.493325/-	13-01-2026
13	Gurusiddayya Basavaraj Hiremath, Halayya Basavaraj Hiremath, Channaveeramma Basavaraj Hiremath, Karabasagouda Hanamanthagouda Goudru, **/NHL00260028139/** Hubli	Residential Gramthana Property Bearing Vpc No.59/1, Property No.151700303000200328, Measuring East To West: 16.50Mtr And North To South: 10 Mtr, Total Measuring 165.00Sq Mtr And Building Measuring 165.00 So Mtr, Situated At Bharadi Village Within Kuragund Gram Panchayat, Tq & Dist: Haveri, Karnataka - 581110. East-Road, West-Property of Guddappa Hanumantappa Hulli, South-Property of Veerayya Hiremath, North-Property of Chikkappa Ningappa Gejji	14-10-2025 & Rs.925720/-	13-01-2026
14	Praveen Muttappa Barki, Ramesh Muttappa Barki, Muttappa Dyamappa Barki, Sumitravva Muttappa Barki, Qwazamohiddin R Mujavar, **/NHL00260026161/** Hubli	Residential Gramthana Property Bearing Vpc No.40, Property No.151700303100100077, Total Measuring 163.80Sq Mtr And Building Measuring 73.51Sq Mtr, Situated At Kancharagatti Village, Tq & Dist: Haveri, Karnataka - 581115. East-Property of Nagappa R Barki, West-Property of Honnappa H Barki, South-Govt. Road, North-Govt. Drainage	14-10-2025 & Rs.925566/-	13-01-2026
15	Sateesh V Ballary, Nagarathnamma S M, Veerupakdhappa B K, Ravi S M, **/NHL00480007165/** Davangare	All That Piece And Parcel of The Site Carved Property Sy No. 148/1A,In That Site No. 89, Property No. 148/1A/ 89; E Swathu No. 151200201400122257, Measuring 148.42 Sq-Mts, Situated At Doddabathi Village Doddabathi Gram Panchayath, Davanagere, Karnataka - 577566. East-Site No. 88, West-9.14 Mtrs Road, South-12.20 Mtrs Road, North-Site No. 90	14-10-2025 & Rs.1240100/-	13-01-2026
16	Rajanna S, Puttalakshmi K, Krishnappa N, **/NHL00930032477/** Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing Katha No.235/235 And E-Katha No.152500500301520129, Measuring East To West: 10.0584 Meters And North To South: 6.7056000000000004 Meters, Situated At Achenahalli Village, Kasaba Hobli, Madhugiri Taluk, Tumkur District, Under The Limit of D. V. Halli Gramapanchayathi Pin: 572132, Karnataka. East-Road, West-Galli, South-Road, North-Sy No Property	14-10-2025 & Rs.528722/-	13-01-2026
17	Lakshmi, Basavaraju, **/MHL00340036887/** Mysore	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing No.35/A, P.I.D.No.152200601803120003, Situated At Beguru Village, Mutthoru Gramapanchayath, Periyapatna Taluk And Mysore District, Measuring East To West 12.192 Meters And North To South 9.144 Meters, Total Measuring 111.48 Square Meters Pin 571107, Karnataka. East-Property Belongs To Doddamma, West-Road, South-House Belongs To Basavaraju, North-Road	14-10-2025 & Rs.518442/-	13-01-2026
18	Rajanna H, Jalajakshi S, Karthik H B, **/NLAP0093032257/** Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing Katha No.383/113/1/51 And E-Katha No.152500701200600397, Measuring East To West: 9.144 Meters And North Tosouth: 12.192 Meters, Situated At Hosuru Village, Gowdagere Hobli, Sira Taluk, Tumkur District, Hosuru Gramapanchayathi, Karnataka- 572139. East-House of Tivamma, West-House of Hanumantharayappa, South-House of Ningamma, North-Road	14-10-2025 & Rs.598940/-	13-01-2026
19	Ganesha G, Sarojamma B, Govindappa T, Mudda Hanumakka, **/NHL00930032145/** Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing Katha No.431 And E-Katha No. 152500501200100430 Measuring East To West: 14.9352 Meters And North To South:.3.53568 Meters, Situated At Midigeshi Village, Midigeshi Hobli, Madhugiri Taluk, Tumkur District, Under The Limit of Midigeshi Gramapanchayathi, Karnataka- 572133. East-Road, West-Road, South-Old House of Ganganna, North-House of Thimmaraju	14-10-2025 & Rs.536283/-	13-01-2026
20	Shobha S, Mahadeva K, Kamalamma S, **/MLAP0092030727/** Vinayanagar Ramnagara	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing No. 136/106/19, E Khatha No.152900102901100134, Total Measuring 148.64 Sq.meter, Situated At Thimmasandra Village, Thagachagere Grama Panchayath, Channapatna Taluk, Ramanagara District, Karnataka - 562160. East-House of Ramabovi, West-House of Ravi, South Government Road, North-Site of Sampathkumar	14-10-2025 & Rs.513318/-	13-01-2026
21	Mujeebulla A Dundasi, Neha Dundasi, Mahddinsab Rajesabanavar, **/NHL00260028451/** Hubli	Residential Gramthana Property Bearing Vpc No. 24/2, Property No.151700202300320082, Total Measuring 111.54SqMtr, Situated At Shiragod Village, Tq: Hanagal & Dist: Haveri, Karnataka - 581104. East-Gram Panchayat Road, West-Property of Nannesab Dundasi, South Property of Abdulkhadar Banavasi, North-Property of Sabajanasab Bellad	14-10-2025 & Rs.737339/-	13-01-2026
22	Fazul Unnisa H, Asudulla S, **/MHL00510029013/** Shimoga	All That The Piece or Parcel of Site Along With Structure Standing There On Being Bearing Site/Khatha/Property No. 121/1/2A1, E-Property No. 152400502800100156, Measuring Total 278.75 Sq. Meter, Including 94.29 Sq. Meter Situated At Ayanuru Village, Ayanuru Village Panchayath, Shivamogga Taluk, Shivamogga District, Karnataka- 577211. East- Property of Shafiulla, West- Property of Ameera Sab, South- V. P. Road, North- Kere Angala	14-10-2025 & Rs.525665/-	13-01-2026
23	Ravi M, Shreemathi C, Jayakumara V, **/NHL00900029011/** Vivekananda Circle	Unique No.152200102502600056 Property No. 25 B, Admeasuring 58.06 Sq.mts, Mattkere Colony B Matkeere Grampanchathy Mysore Karnataka-571121, Main Road, Heggadadevankote, P.O. Matakere, Mysore, Karnataka, Pin: 571121. East-Road, West-House of Jayakumar, South-Road, North-Own Property Old House	14-10-2025 & Rs.533480/-	13-01-2026
24	Hucha Nayaka, Geetha K, Yashoda H, **/NHL00340029033/** Mysore	Property No.581/371, Unique No.150800301201400020, Admeasuring 130.34 Sq.mtskote Village, Sattegal Gp, Kollegala, Chamarajanagara., Kote Village, Sattegal Gp, Kollegala, Chamarajanagara., Main Road, Kollegal, P.O. Sathegala, Channrajnagar, Karnataka, Pin: 571440. East-Property of Marihucchanayaka, West-Road, South-Road, North-Property of Balu	14-10-2025 & Rs.517824/-	13-01-2026
25	Devaraju V C, Chinnappa D, Lakshmamma D, **/NHL00930026457/** Tumkur	Property Khata No. 179. P.I.D. No.152500502700220092 Measuring East- West - 13.7160 Meters And North-South: 9.144 Meters, Agrahara Village, Vaddarahatti, Near Main Road, Madhugiri, P.O. Puravara, Tumkur, Karnataka, Pin: 572175. East-Property of Sahana, West-Road, South-House of Subharayappa And Yellamma, North-Galli And House of Lalithamma	14-10-2025 & Rs.830546/-	13-01-2026
26	Abhilasha B, Kalpana N, B Harisha, **/NHL00340024825/** Mysore	Property No: 1/1/1, Unique No:152200700804900251, Admeasuring 90.02 Square Meters, Vaddarakoppalu Village, Maliyuru Gp, T Narasipura Block, Main Road, Tirumakudal Narsipur, P.O. Maliyur, Mysore, Karnataka, Pin: 571101. East-House Belongs To Bhagyamma W/O Velaraju, West-Road, South-House Belongs To Geetha W/O Viji, North-Road	14-10-2025 & Rs.881402/-	13-01-2026
27	Nigar Unnisa, Imran Ali Khan, Sheer Ali Khan, **/MHL00480019219/** Davangare	E Swathu-151200101200100803, Property No. 679/1, Measuring 83.51 Sq.mtrs, Kerebilichi Grama, Kerebilichi Grama Panchayath, Channagiri Block, Kerebilichi Grama, Davanagare, P.O. Kerebilichi, Davanagare, Karnataka, Pin: 577218. East-Road, West-Conservancy Road, South-House of Mohammed Khaleem, North-House of Rifakhath Ali Khan	14-10-2025 & Rs.509038/-	13-01-2026
28	Hanumantaraju A, Anjinapppa B, Rangamma N, **/NHL00930017008/** Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing Old Katha No. 189/209 New Katha No.206 And E-Katha No. 152500702501120019, Measuring E-W 9.144 Meters And North To South: 12.192 Meters Situated Hosamalanahalli Village, Kalambella Hobli, Sira Taluk Tumkur District Karnataka, Pin: 572137. East-Katte, West-Road, South-Grama Thana, North-Vacant Site	14-10-2025 & Rs.513377/-	13-01-2026
29	Gangadhara V, Adarsh B G, Gangavathi S, Manjula V, **/NHL00340017786/** Mysore	Property No. 31-515-125, Ward No: 9, Property No. 5589/Site No: 29, Assessment No. 5589/Site No. 29 Santhi Nagar, Pandavapura Town, Pandavapura Thaluk, Mandya District., Totally 52.95471 Square Meters Karnataka, Pin: 571426. East-Temple Place, West-Vacant Site, South-Vacant Place, North-Road	14-10-2025 & Rs.697659/-	13-01-2026
30	Bibi Maryam Jiyavullakhan Alur, Jiyaullakhan Adam Khan Alur, Hasinabanu Adamkhan Akki Alur, Khaja Mainudin Tahashildar, **/MHL00260013779/** Hubli	All That Part And Parcel of The Property Bearing G.P. No. 30 Measuring 222.97 Sq.mtrs Along With Residential Structure P.I.D. No: 151700202700300323 In Mantagi Village Mantagi Tq: Hangal, District Haveri, Karnataka, Pin: 581104. East-Property of Fakkiravva B Madar, West-Govt Road, South-Property of Ratnavva Basappa Kathiyavar, North-Property of Najamunnisa Sulemannavar	14-10-2025 & Rs.510664/-	13-01-2026
31	Anandappa Ramanna Lamani, Ramavva Anandappa Lamani, Muttappa Hemappa Lamani, **/NHL00260012279/** Hubli	All That Part And Aprcel of The Property Bearing Gp No: 345/2 Measuring 128.14 Sq.mtrs Along With Residential Structure Bearing E- Property No:151700601400500229, Sevalapur Village Shirabadagi Grama Panchayt Savanur Taluk Haveri District, Karnataka, Pin: 581118. East-Property of Shankrappa Soorappa Lamani, West-Property of Somanath Ramanna Lamani, South-Road, North-Road	14-10-2025 & Rs.819966/-	13-01-2026

Date: 17th January 2026 | Place: KARNATAKA **Sd/- Authorised Officer Manappuram Home Finance Ltd**

QUICK READ

1 more Arrested in Manipur Petrol Pump Blast Case

Imphal

With the arrest of one more person by the security forces, the total number of accused apprehended in connection with the bomb explosion at a petrol pump in Manipur's Bishnupur district has risen to two, officials said on Friday. A police official said that security forces arrested Pukhrambam Bimol Meitei alias Inaobi (41) from the Lamphel Sana Keithel area under Imphal West district. Pukhrambam Bimol Meitei, a resident of Kakching district, is an accomplice allegedly involved in causing the explosion at a fuel station at Moirang Thana Leikai in Bishnupur district on January 8.

Tension in Bengal's Beldanga

Kolkata

Tension prevailed at Beldanga in Murshidabad district of West Bengal on Friday after the body of a local migrant worker, who was allegedly killed in neighbouring Jharkhand, reached his native village. The deceased migrant worker was identified as Alauddin Sheikh (36), a resident of Sujarpur-Kamarpur village panchayat under Beldanga in Murshidabad district. Sheikh was staying in neighbouring Jharkhand and earning his livelihood as a street hawker. His family members alleged, the news of his demise was received from Jharkhand. Jharkhand Police informed the family that Sheikh's body was found hanging in his rented room.

HC stays Ranchi Police probe against ED officials

Ranchi

The Jharkhand High Court on Friday stayed with immediate effect the Ranchi Police probe into the alleged assault on money-laundering accused Santosh Kumar at the Enforcement Directorate (ED) office in Ranchi. The interim order was passed by a Bench of Justice Sanjay Kumar Dwivedi while hearing a criminal writ petition filed by the ED challenging the FIR and subsequent police action against its officials. During the hearing, the High Court observed that the functioning of a federal investigating agency cannot be obstructed under the guise of a vpolice investigation.

Gujarat Pushes Infrastructure Drive, Launches ₹112 Cr Project

Gujarat govt advances urbanisation agenda as Navsari launches a ₹112-crore project to upgrade water, drainage infrastructure

AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat government, led by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, continues to press ahead with its broader vision of strengthening urbanisation and improving ease of living across the state. With rapid city expansion bringing newly merged peri-urban areas into municipal limits, the state administration has prioritised bridging long-standing gaps in essential civic services through focused infrastructure investments.

In line with this approach, the Navsari Municipal Corporation (NMC) has launched a major ₹112-crore integrated water supply and drainage project to address chronic shortages of drinking water and inadequate sewage systems in its peripheral zones. The initiative assumes added significance as Navsari was officially upgraded to a municipal corporation on January 1, 2025, following the merger of the former Navsari–Vijalpor municipality with four adjoining villages—Aru, Dharagiri, Dantej and Hansapor. For years, these peri-urban areas struggled with outdated and insufficient water pipelines, coupled with the absence of underground drainage networks. The lack of proper sanitation infrastructure frequently resulted in unhygienic conditions, waterlogging and health concerns, particularly affecting children and elderly residents. Civic officials noted that residents often depended on temporary or unreliable arrangements, highlighting the urgent need for a permanent solution.

The newly launched project aims to comprehensively resolve these issues by establishing a modern and integrated water and sewage network. Designed to directly benefit more than 25,000 residents, the ₹112-crore initiative will be implemented in phases. Key components include the laying of new water supply pipelines, construction of an upgraded drainage network, installation of overhead water tanks and underground sumps, development of a sewage pumping station, and the setting up of a fully equipped Sewage Treatment Plant (STP). In addition, a new water treatment plant will be established to ensure the supply of safe and adequate drinking water.

Delhi High Court Seeks CBI Response on Rabri Devi's Plea

NEW DELHI

Delhi High Court issued notice to the CBI on Rabri Devi's plea challenging charges in IRCTC scam.

The Delhi High Court on Friday issued notice to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on a petition filed by former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi, challenging a trial court order that directed the framing of criminal charges against her and her family members in the IRCTC hotel scam case.

After a brief hearing, a single-judge Bench presided over by Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma sought the response of the CBI and listed the matter for further hearing on January 19. In her plea, Rabri Devi argued that the trial court had failed to properly appreciate the material placed on record and had erroneously framed charges against her based merely on presumptions, without sufficient legal grounds.

Rabri Devi, who is the wife of Lalu Prasad Yadav, contended that she had been wrongly implicated in the case and that the order directing the framing of charges deserved to be set aside. Her petition forms part of a series of legal challenges mounted by members of the Yadav family against the trial court's decision in the high-profile corruption case.

The development comes just days after the Delhi High Court issued notice on a similar plea filed by her son, Tejashwi Yadav, an RJD leader and former Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar. Tejashwi Yadav had challenged the same trial court order that directed the framing of charges against him and other family members in the IRCTC hotel scam case.

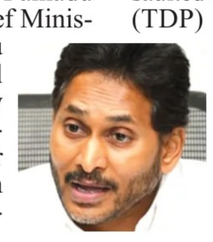
While issuing notice on Tejashwi Yadav's criminal revision petition, along with his application seeking a stay on the trial court proceedings, Justice Sharma had directed the CBI to respond and ordered that his plea be heard together with a similar petition filed by Lalu Prasad Yadav.

In an order passed on October 13, 2025, Special Judge (PC Act) Vishal Gogne of the Rouse Avenue Courts cleared the way for the trial of Lalu Prasad Yadav, Rabri Devi, Tejashwi Yadav and other accused. The court directed that charges be framed under Sections 420 (cheating) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code, along with relevant provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, after the accused pleaded not guilty.

Jagan flays Naidu after YSRCP activist's murder

AMARAVATI

YSR Congress Party president Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday reacted strongly to the murder of a YSRCP activist allegedly by TDP men in Andhra Pradesh's Palnadu district, warning Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu that he will certainly have to pay the price. Jagan accused Chief Minister Naidu of indulging in the politics of violence.



Mr. Chandrababu Naidu, the people will never forgive you for indulging in the politics of violence. You will certainly have to pay the price for such incidents. Never forget that what you sow today will inevitably be reaped tomorrow, YS Jagan posted on 'X'.

Online movie streaming services

The YSRCP leader was reacting to the death of Manda Salman in Pinneli village under Gurazala Assembly constituency after he was allegedly assaulted by Telugu Desam Party (TDP) workers and leaders. Salman was grievously injured, slipped into a coma, and, after battling for life in the hospital for three days, succumbed to his injuries on Thursday. Mr. Chandrababu Naidu, are you even fit to govern? How many lives will you sacrifice for a political vendetta? Even while holding the Chief Minister's post, will you indulge in such lawlessness under the guise of the Red Book Constitution and political governance? asked the fmr CM.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed Indian youth and startups as key drivers of innovation at Startup India's decade milestone.

Indian Youth Driving Innovation: PM Modi

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that India's youth are increasingly focused on solving real-world problems, as he marked the completion of 10 years of the Startup India mission. Addressing entrepreneurs, innovators and policymakers at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, the Prime Minister praised startup founders for charting new paths and enhancing India's global reputation as an innovation-driven economy.

Lauding the entrepreneurial spirit of the country's young population, PM Modi said India's startups are driven by innovation and enterprise and are shaping a self-reliant and resilient economy. India's youth are focused on solving real problems. Driven by innovation and enterprise, India's startups are shaping a self-reliant and resilient economy, he said, addressing a packed audience.

Reflecting on the progress achieved over the past decade, the Prime Minister described Startup India as nothing short of a revolution. In just 10 years, the Startup India Mission has become a revolution. Today, India is the world's third-largest startup ecosystem, he said, underlining the scale and speed of growth witnessed since the programme's launch in 2016.

PM Modi noted that a decade ago, India had fewer than 500 startups. Today, that number has soared to over 2,00,000, he said. He also highlighted the sharp rise in unicorns, recalling that India had only four unicorns in 2014. Now, the country boasts more than 125 active unicorns. This remarkable growth has captured the world's attention, he added.

He said Indian startups are working across more than 50 sectors, including deep tech, space tech, drone technology, quantum computing, agritech, and artificial intelligence and machine learning. According to the Prime Minister, startups are no longer just scaling up into unicorns, but many existing unicorns are now launching initial public offerings and generating large-scale employment opportunities across the country.

I see before me the future of a new and emerging India, PM Modi said, while commending young entrepreneurs for their courage to dream and innovate. Recalling the situation a decade ago, he said there was little scope for individual innovation and enterprise.

Sankranti is example of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat': HM Amit Shah

NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday attended the third International Kite Festival 2026 in the national capital and said that Makar Sankranti has become a powerful example of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat,' reflecting India's cultural unity amid diversity.

The event was also attended by Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, along with several senior officials and a large gathering of citizens.

Addressing the gathering, Union Home Minister Amit Shah extended greetings to the people of the country, particularly farmers, on the occasion of Makar Sankranti and other harvest festivals celebrated across India.

I want to congratulate the countrymen, especially our farmers, on the festivals of Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Lohri, Magh Bihu, and Uttarayan. Uttarayan is celebrated under different names in different parts of the country. It is an important festival because we all depend immensely on the Lord Sun, he said.

Explaining the significance of the festival, HM Shah said that Makar Sankranti is celebrated when the sun enters the zodiac sign Capricorn.

In many parts of the country, this day is also known as 'Khichdi Utsav'. It is primarily a festival of farmers. From this day, farmers begin their New Year, marking a new agricultural cycle, he added. The Home Minister praised the efforts of the Delhi government and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) for organising the third edition of the International Kite Festival. He said the initiative needs to be expanded and popularised through sustained efforts.

The beginning that has been made should be taken forward in a way that makes the Kite Festival more accessible to the public. This festival has the potential to connect people from all over the country to Delhi and, in the future, become a nationwide celebration, Shah said.

He suggested forming a dedicated committee to expand the festival, enhance public participation, and transform it into a grand and comprehensive cultural event.

Delhi's Kite Festival should become the centre of kite festivals across the country, he added. Referring to the venue, Baansera, the Home Minister said it exemplifies how determination can transform a vision into reality. Baansera is a demonstration of how strong resolve can turn an idea into a beautiful, tangible space. Today, it has become a very attractive place for the people of Delhi.

BJP announces election of next national president

NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday formally announced the election process for choosing its next national president as part of the party's ongoing Sangathan Parv 2024. In an official statement, Rajya Sabha member and BJP national election incharge Dr K. Laxman outlined the detailed timetable for the organisational exercise.

He said the electoral roll for the presidential election will be published on Friday. According to the schedule, nominations will be filed on January 19 between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. at the party headquarters in New Delhi. The scrutiny of nomination papers will be conducted on the same day from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. The window for withdrawal of nominations has been fixed between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Dr Laxman further stated that a formal press communique will be issued at 6.30 p.m. on January 19, following the completion of the withdrawal process. He added that the name of the new BJP national president will be officially announced on January 20 between 11.30 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. at the party headquarters in the national Capital. BJP's working president Nitin Nabin is set to take over as the next national president, with his elevation expected to be formally announced on January 20. Nabin is a five-time member of the Bihar Assembly and a former Minister in the government of Bihar.

INDIGO REFUND ASSURANCE

IndiGo Clears Refunds for Flight Cancellations: DGCA

NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Friday said low-cost carrier IndiGo has claimed to have fully processed and cleared all refunds related to the cancellation of its flights during the disruption period between December 3 and 5 last year.

According to the aviation watchdog, the airline informed the regulator that refunds for all IndiGo flight cancellations during December 3–5, 2025, have been credited back to passengers to the original source of payment. In addition, passengers whose flights were cancelled within 24 hours of the scheduled departure time during the above period may claim compensation, where applicable, the DGCA said in an official notification.

As an added relief measure, IndiGo has also extended a special 'Gesture of Care' (GoC) initiative for affected passengers. Under this scheme, eligible passengers will receive two travel vouchers worth ₹5,000 each, with a combined value of ₹10,000. The vouchers will be valid for a period of 12 months, the airline said.

The DGCA noted that the GoC benefit applies to passengers whose flights were either cancelled or delayed by more than three hours during the December 3–5 disruption window. Passengers have been advised to check their eligibility and submit the necessary details to avail of the vouchers. The regulator also urged travellers to ensure that accurate contact details, including mobile numbers and email addresses, are provided at the time of booking, whether tickets are purchased directly through the airline's website or via travel agents.

The large-scale cancellations during the three-day period had caused widespread disruption to domestic air travel, leaving tens of thousands of passengers stranded across the country. IndiGo had cancelled thousands of flights amid what officials later described as poor pilot roster planning and inadequate preparedness for tighter safety regulations.

ASSAM POLL MEET

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Karnataka DCM DK Shivakumar, AICC leaders and senior Congress functionaries attend a meeting on Assam elections at AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence in New Delhi on Friday.

QUICK READ

Pakistan intensifies detention of Afghan refugees

Kabul

Pakistani authorities have stepped up arrests of Afghan refugees in Islamabad, moving dozens, including a journalist, to temporary camps amid ongoing deportation efforts. Refugees report harassment, raids, and fear, with many lacking legal protection despite living in Pakistan for years. Human rights groups, including Amnesty International, urged Islamabad to respect international refugee laws and ensure safety, warning of risks to women, journalists, and activists if deported. Since 2023, Pakistan's "Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan" has forced nearly 1.5 million Afghans back, with 778,000 in 2025 alone. Experts say these actions deepen humanitarian concerns and threaten the rights of vulnerable populations.

Seoul bus crash injures thirteen pedestrians

Seoul

A bus veered off the road near Seodaemun Station in western Seoul on Friday, striking pedestrians and a building, leaving two seriously injured and 11 others hurt. Victims include a woman in her 50s with a broken leg and a man in his 30s with head injuries. Authorities are testing the bus driver for drugs, though no signs of alcohol were found. Witnesses described chaotic scenes as the vehicle hit a car, motorcycle, and pedestrians. Police have deployed over 270 personnel to secure the area and are investigating the cause. Traffic and rescue operations continue.

Greek court clears aid workers of smuggling charges

Lesbos

A Greek court acquitted 24 aid workers involved in refugee rescues on Lesbos of migrant smuggling and money laundering charges, ending a multi-year trial that rights groups called politically motivated. Defendants included Sarah Mardini, a Syrian refugee who helped save lives in 2015, and Sean Binder, a German volunteer. Arrested in 2018, some spent over 100 days in pre-trial detention. Lawyers described the ruling as "courageous" after nearly 2,900 days of legal delays. The case had discouraged humanitarian efforts. Observers urged Greece to stop criminalizing aid, focus on saving lives, and uphold international refugee protections.

Putin Talks With Netanyahu, Iran's Pezeshkian Amid Protests in Iran

The protests in Iran began December 28 over inflation and currency collapse, spreading nationwide to over 280 locations

MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke separately with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Friday as large protests continued across Iran against its leadership.

According to the Kremlin, Putin and Netanyahu discussed rising tensions in the Middle East, with a focus on Iran. During the call, Putin offered Russia's help in mediation and said he supported stronger political and diplomatic efforts to protect stability and security in the region. The discussion came as Israel closely watches events unfolding inside Iran.

Later the same day, Putin held a phone call with Iranian President Pezeshkian. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Russia would continue efforts to reduce tensions and avoid further escalation in the region. Moscow has long tried to keep working relations with both Israel and Iran, even as regional pressures increase.

The calls followed massive protests in Iran that began on December 28. Demonstrations first erupted over record inflation and the sharp fall of Iran's currency. Since then, the unrest has spread nationwide, with reports of protests in more than 280 locations.

Iranian authorities initially admitted that economic hardship had triggered public anger. However, official language later hardened. Senior leaders warned that those helping enemies of the Islamic Republic would face harsh punishment. Some officials also accused foreign-backed groups of trying to fuel chaos.

In recent days, the protests appeared to weaken after the government shut down internet access and launched a tough security crackdown. Activists say more than 3,400 people have been killed during the unrest, according to a US-based human rights group.

Regional tensions remain high as international leaders watch closely. While concerns of possible US retaliation linger, President Donald Trump has suggested the violence may be slowing, raising cautious hopes of de-escalation.

Yoon Suk Yeol sentenced to five years for abuse, obstruction

SEOUL

The court stated Yoon ordered the Presidential Security Service to block investigators, excluded Cabinet members, drafted and destroyed martial law documents, and deleted records from secure military phones

Former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol was sentenced to five years in prison on Friday after being found guilty on multiple charges linked to obstruction of justice and abuse of power.

The Seoul Central District Court delivered its first ruling related to Yoon's short-lived declaration of martial law in December 2024, a move that triggered political turmoil and legal action.

The court said Yoon ordered the Presidential Security Service to block investigators attempting to detain him in January last year. He was also accused of excluding Cabinet members from a key meeting, drafting and later destroying documents linked to the martial law order, and deleting records from secure military phones.

Judges found him guilty on most charges, though he was cleared of violating the rights of two Cabinet members and ordering false press statements. The court said the former president showed no remorse and described the nature of the crimes as serious.

Special prosecutors had sought a ten-year sentence, calling Yoon's actions a grave misuse of state institutions to hide wrongdoing. The court, however, handed down a reduced five-year term.

The ruling also confirmed that investigators acted within their legal authority while probing the former president, rejecting claims of political targeting.

The verdict is expected to influence another major case, in which Yoon faces charges of leading an insurrection through the martial law decree. Prosecutors earlier demanded the death penalty in that case.

The court is scheduled to rule on the insurrection charges on February 19. Yoon is currently facing eight separate trials involving the martial law attempt, corruption allegations linked to his wife, and the death of marine.

Museveni leads Uganda vote amid post-election violence reports

KAMPALA

Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni took an early lead in presidential election results released on Friday, as reports of deadly violence and repression followed the vote.

The electoral commission said Museveni had secured about 76 percent of counted votes from nearly half of polling stations. His main rival, opposition leader and singer Bobi Wine, trailed with just under 20 percent. Six other candidates shared remaining votes.

Museveni, 81, has ruled Uganda since 1986 and sought another decisive victory after a tense campaign marked by clashes at opposition events. After voting, he said he expected to win comfortably if the process was fair.

Bobi Wine rejected the results, alleging widespread fraud. He urged supporters to protest, even as the election was held under an internet shutdown meant to prevent misinformation.

The United Nations human rights office earlier warned the election was taking place amid intimidation, arrests, and limits on political freedoms.

Violence was reported overnight in Butambala, southwest of Kampala. A human rights activist said soldiers and police killed at least 10 opposition supporters gathered at a lawmaker's home to follow results. She said security forces fired tear gas and live bullets.

Machado presented the medal to thank Trump for supporting Venezuelan freedom; Trump will keep it, Nobel rights remain hers

Trump accepts Nobel medal from Venezuela opposition

WASHINGTON

Former US President Donald Trump accepted a Nobel Peace Prize medal from Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado during a meeting at the White House, drawing global attention to Venezuela's political future.

Machado presented the medal as a gesture of gratitude, saying it recognised Trump's commitment to the freedom of the Venezuelan people. A White House official confirmed that Trump plans to keep the medal, though the Nobel honour legally remains with Machado.

Trump later posted on social media that the gesture reflected mutual respect, thanking Machado for what he called a meaningful presentation. The White House also shared photographs showing Trump holding the framed medal with a message praising his leadership.

The meeting lasted a little over an hour and marked the first in-person interaction between Trump and Machado. She later described the discussion as excellent but did not share details.

The gesture came as Machado seeks to influence US policy towards Venezuela. Trump has earlier ruled out installing her as Venezuela's leader, instead backing a more cautious approach.

Trump has openly expressed interest in winning a Nobel Peace Prize in the past and has linked it to his diplomatic efforts. However, the Norwegian Nobel Institute has clarified that prizes cannot be transferred or shared.

After the White House meeting, Machado met lawmakers from both parties on Capitol Hill, where she has found stronger support.

Some US senators raised concerns that political repression in Venezuela continues despite recent changes. They warned that democratic progress remains uncertain.

Trump has said his priority is securing US access to Venezuelan oil and rebuilding the country's economy, rather than pushing immediate political change.

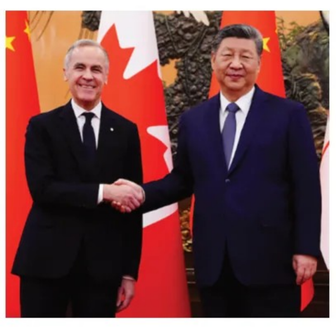
He has also praised Venezuela's interim leadership, which critics say may slow democratic reforms.

Machado, banned from contesting Venezuela's last election, continues to seek an active role in shaping the country's future amid ongoing uncertainty.

The meeting highlighted the complex balance between diplomacy, democracy, and economic interests in US-Venezuela relations.

Canada and China cut tariffs, reset ties

BEIJING



Canada and China have agreed to sharply reduce tariffs on electric vehicles and canola in a major step toward repairing strained trade relations, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said on Friday.

Under the new arrangement, Canada will allow imports of Chinese electric vehicles at a tariff rate of 6.1 per cent, a sharp cut from the earlier 100 per cent duty imposed in 2024. Carney said the move would help Canada rebuild cooperation with its second-largest trading partner.

He added that the agreement would also open doors for Chinese investment in Canada's clean energy and automobile sectors, supporting jobs and long-term growth.

China, in return, is expected to significantly lower tariffs on Canadian canola seed by March 1. Current combined tariffs stand at around 84 per cent, but are expected to fall to nearly 15 per cent, offering major relief to Canadian farmers.

Carney said China is a four billion dollar market for Canadian canola, and easing restrictions would unlock nearly three billion dollars in export orders. Tariffs on other products such as canola meal, lobster, crab, and peas are also expected to be removed for the rest of the year.

The two countries also agreed to restart high-level economic talks and boost cooperation in agriculture, oil, gas, and green energy. Canada welcomed further Chinese investment and said it plans to double its energy grid capacity over the next 15 years.

Carney said Canada aims to expand liquefied natural gas exports to Asia, targeting 50 million tonnes annually by 2030.

Analysts said the deal reflects Canada's effort to diversify trade ties amid tensions with the United States. While Ottawa remains a close US ally, experts believe the agreement signals a more practical approach toward China.

Both sides said the reset would help remove trade barriers and build a more stable economic relationship going forward.

BANGLADESH RELIGIOUS STRIFE

UK MP raises alarm over rising minority violence in Bangladesh

LONDON

A senior British lawmaker has raised serious concerns over rising violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh, warning that the situation has become deeply troubling ahead of national elections next month.

Speaking in the House of Commons, UK Conservative Party leader and MP Bob Blackman said minorities, especially Hindus, are facing growing attacks across the country. He claimed that Hindu men are being killed on the streets, while homes and temples are being set on fire. Other religious communities are also facing similar violence, he added.

Blackman said he had earlier raised the issue during a parliamentary debate, after which the Leader of the House contacted the Foreign Secretary regarding the worsening conditions in Bangladesh. He described the situation as disastrous and urged urgent attention.

The lawmaker also expressed concern over the political climate ahead of the February 12 elections. He pointed out that the Awami League, one of Bangladesh's major political parties, has been banned from contesting the polls despite having strong public support.

According to Blackman, the exclusion of a major party raises serious doubts about whether the elections can truly be called free and fair. He further warned that extremist groups are demanding a referendum that could permanently alter Bangladesh's constitution.

Blackman called on the UK Foreign Secretary to make a statement in Parliament next week, explaining what steps the British government plans to take to protect minorities and support inclusive and democratic elections in Bangladesh.

His remarks follow a joint statement last week by four UK parliamentarians from different parties, who criticised the ban on popular political parties under the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus.

The lawmakers said the interim administration, which is unelected, ignored advice from the United Nations, the UK, and other allies. They warned that elections held without key political parties cannot be considered democratic.

The MPs urged the international community to closely monitor developments in Bangladesh and press for the protection of minority rights and democratic principles.

Israel troops face mental health crisis

JERUSALEM

Israel is facing a sharp rise in post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide cases among its soldiers as the war in Gaza continues into its second year, according to official reports and health experts.

Data from Israel's Defence Ministry shows PTSD cases among troops have increased by nearly 40 per cent since 2023. Officials warn the number could rise much further in coming years if the conflict continues and trauma remains untreated.

The war, which began after the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack, expanded into heavy fighting in Gaza and along the Lebanon border. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers and reservists were deployed in some of the fiercest combat Israel has seen.

Health providers say many soldiers are struggling with intense fear, constant alertness, and memories of violence. Some also face moral injury, caused by the emotional burden of accidental harm to civilians during combat operations.

Clinical experts say soldiers often carry guilt and distress from split-second decisions made under fire. Living with the feeling of having harmed innocent people can be deeply damaging and difficult to heal.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

	7	1		5	6		9	
8			1			7		4
3		9	8		7	1		6
	3			9			1	
9		5	3		1	4		8
4		7		8	5		3	
	8		9			6		5
5		2		6	8		4	
	6		5			9		4

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

9	7	4	6	1	3	5	2	8
5	8	3	4	2	7	6	9	1
6	1	2	5	9	8	7	3	4
1	3	5	9	7	6	8	4	2
8	6	7	1	4	2	9	5	3
2	4	9	3	8	5	1	6	7
3	5	1	8	6	4	2	7	9
4	2	8	7	5	9	3	1	6
7	6	6	2	3	1	4	8	5

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

QUICK READ

Seoul shares hit records, rally continues again

Seoul

South Korean shares closed at a new record on Friday, rising for the eleventh straight session as strong buying continued in semiconductor stocks. The KOSPI index ended above 4,800 points, showing steady investor confidence since the year began. Foreign and institutional investors led purchases, while retail investors sold shares. Samsung Electronics and SK hynix gained, supporting the market. Energy and cosmetics stocks also rose. However, some automobile and biotech shares fell. The Korean won weakened against the US dollar. Market experts said optimism over earnings and global chip demand supported the rally during uncertain global economic conditions.

Anthropic names Irina Ghose to lead India

New Delhi

US artificial intelligence company Anthropic has appointed Irina Ghose as its India Managing Director as it plans to open its first office in the country. Ghose brings over thirty years of experience in growing technology businesses and previously led Microsoft India. She said India can shape how AI is built and used responsibly. Anthropic said her leadership will help expand teams, work with policymakers, and support businesses. India is the company's second largest market for its Claude AI platform, with strong demand for technical applications nationwide. The move highlights growing global interest in India's AI ecosystem.

Indians show strong faith in nation's direction

New Delhi

A new global report says 81 percent of Indians believe the country is moving in the right direction, far above the global average. The study surveyed people across twenty countries and found Indians highly optimistic and engaged. Many respondents expect companies to act responsibly, support local communities, and follow strong environmental and social values. India ranked among the world's most positive nations. Experts said people now judge businesses by real impact, not promises. For companies, understanding local expectations is key. The findings highlight India as both demanding and full of opportunity for future growth and trust.

Export incentives extended to postal shipments

The move will boost MSME competitiveness in smaller towns, enhance exports, and leverage the postal network effectively

NEW DELHI

The government has extended export incentives to goods sent through postal shipments to strengthen India's e-commerce and MSME sectors, officials said on Friday.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs announced that export benefits under Duty Drawback, Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products, and Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies will now apply to postal exports made electronically from January 15.

The move is expected to improve the competitiveness of micro, small, and medium enterprises, especially those based in smaller towns and remote areas. Officials said it will also give a strong push to exports using the postal network.

According to the Finance Ministry, the decision creates a level playing field for exporters who rely on the postal route and supports the growth of cross-border e-commerce in an inclusive manner.

India currently has 28 Foreign Post Offices notified under the Customs Act, which handle international postal trade. Over the years, the government has taken several steps to simplify postal and courier-based exports.

The Postal Export Electronic Declaration and Processing Regulations introduced in 2022 enabled complete digital processing of export declarations. This was followed by the Postal Import Regulations in 2025 to allow electronic handling of imports.

In September 2024, automated refund of integrated GST for postal exports was also rolled out, reducing delays and paperwork for exporters.

To further support e-commerce exports, the government launched the Hub and Spoke model in partnership with the Department of Posts. Under this system, more than 1,000 Dak Niryat Kendras have been set up across the country.

These centres help MSMEs and small exporters with booking, aggregation, and processing of export parcels.

Officials said the latest decision reflects the government's continued focus on digital reforms and policy support to help MSMEs access global markets and grow exports through simpler, faster channels.

Assam sees silver revolution in poultry sector growth

GUWAHATI

He said the increase ensures regular, affordable egg access, a vital protein source across Assam, improving nutrition, public health outcomes, and supporting vulnerable populations statewide

Assam is steadily moving towards a "Silver Revolution" in the poultry sector, with egg production rising sharply across the state, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Friday.

The Chief Minister said egg production in Assam recorded a strong 28 per cent growth during the 2024–25 financial year, showing clear results of the government's focused push in the poultry sector.

He said the increase is helping ensure regular and affordable access to eggs, an important source of protein and nutrition for people across Assam. The growth also supports better public health outcomes, especially among vulnerable groups.

According to the Chief Minister, the rise in production is the result of continuous policy support, including incentives for poultry farmers, better access to quality chicks and feed, and improved veterinary and extension services.

These steps have helped local farmers increase output while reducing the state's dependence on eggs imported from outside Assam.

CM Sarma said eggs play a key role in fighting malnutrition, particularly among children, pregnant women, and economically weaker sections of society. Higher local production strengthens nutrition schemes such as mid-day meals and other welfare programmes.

He also highlighted the growing role of the poultry sector in rural employment. Thousands of small and marginal farmers, women self-help groups, and rural entrepreneurs are earning additional income through poultry farming.

The sector has emerged as an important part of Assam's rural economy, helping families diversify income and gain financial stability.

The Chief Minister said the government will continue to invest in infrastructure, promote scientific poultry practices, and improve market access to sustain growth.

Efforts are also being made to support value addition, cold storage facilities, and fair pricing for farmers. Calling it a step toward a self-reliant Assam, CM Sarma said strengthening livestock and allied sectors remains a priority.

India meets record power demand, shortages fall

NEW DELHI

India successfully met a record peak power demand of 242.49 gigawatts during the financial year 2025–26, while national energy shortages dropped to a historic low, the government said on Friday. According to the Ministry of Power, energy shortages declined to just 0.03 per cent in FY26, a sharp improvement from 4.2 per cent recorded in 2013–14. Officials said the improvement was driven by major additions to power generation and transmission capacity.

India's total installed power capacity has more than doubled over the last decade, rising from 249 gigawatts in March 2014 to 509.743 gigawatts by November 30, 2025. Between January and November 2025 alone, 55.57 gigawatts of new capacity was added. Per capita electricity consumption also increased strongly, reaching 1,460 kilowatt hours in 2024–25. This marks a rise of over 52 per cent compared to 957 kilowatt hours in 2013–14, reflecting growing household and industrial demand.

Power supply reliability has improved across regions. Average electricity availability in rural areas increased from 12.5 hours in 2014 to 22.6 hours, while urban areas now receive about 23.4 hours of supply daily. Since April 2014, India has added 178 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity, including large hydro. This includes major additions in solar, wind, biomass, and hydro power.

India gains as global markets enter reflation phase

NEW DELHI

India is set to gain as global markets move into a reflationary phase, according to a new report that highlights the country's growing role in world economic growth.

The report by Equirus Wealth says India is expected to contribute more than 15 per cent of global incremental GDP growth between 2025 and 2030, making it one of the strongest engines of expansion worldwide.

It notes that global investors are slowly rethinking their heavy exposure to the United States driven by artificial intelligence stocks and are now looking to diversify across Asian markets.

Foreign institutional investors have pulled out nearly 18 billion dollars from Indian markets in 2025, leaving the country underrepresented in many global portfolios. This has created room for fresh inflows if sentiment toward emerging markets improves.

The report points out that nearly 75 per cent of the MSCI Emerging Markets index is focused on just four economies, China, India, South Korea, and Taiwan.

Within this group, India is expected to stand out due to policy-led growth, improving liquidity conditions, and early signs of a weaker US dollar.

Equirus Wealth believes India's contribution to global growth during the next five years will be larger than the combined contribution of Japan and Germany. The current reflation phase is described as different from earlier cycles, driven not by excess liquidity but by controlled inflation and policy support.

For the first time, India will export its green energy products to Germany, Japan, and Singapore, boosting leadership

India launches first green ammonia mega project

AMARAVATI

India's Andhra Pradesh government on Friday announced that the state will host India's first and the world's largest green ammonia project at Kakinada.

The project, led by clean-energy firm AM Green, will set up a green hydrogen and green ammonia complex with a planned capacity of 1.5 million tonnes per annum at the coastal location.

The first major equipment erection ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, with Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan expected to attend.

The project involves an investment of 10 billion dollars, making it one of the largest clean-energy investments ever undertaken in India.

Officials said the project will create up to 8,000 jobs during the construction phase and generate high-skill employment during operations across allied sectors like renewable energy, logistics, storage, and port services.

For the first time in India's history, green energy products made domestically will be exported to markets such as Germany, Japan, and Singapore, strengthening India's position as a clean-energy exporter.

State IT Minister Nara Lokesh said the project moves Andhra Pradesh closer to becoming a global green-energy hub.

The plant is being developed by converting an existing ammonia-urea facility and will be completed in three phases, reaching full capacity by 2030.

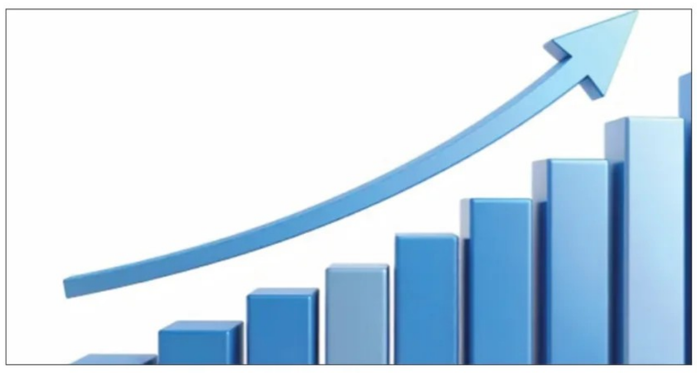
AM Green has signed long-term supply agreements with global buyers and plans to support clean shipping, power generation, and green hydrogen goals.

The integrated system includes large-scale solar and wind power, energy storage, hydrogen production, ammonia manufacturing, and port-based exports, showcasing Andhra Pradesh's complete clean-energy value chain.

The project is expected to boost investment, technology, skills, exports, growth, sustainability, and long-term energy security nationwide.

India fintech funding climbs, ranks third worldwide

NEW DELHI



India's fintech sector raised 2.4 billion dollars in 2025, ranking third globally after the United States and the United Kingdom, according to a new industry report.

Data from market intelligence platform Tracxn showed funding rose two per cent from 2.3 billion dollars in 2024, highlighting steady investor interest despite global uncertainty.

Early-stage funding saw the strongest growth, jumping to 1.2 billion dollars in 2025. This marked a 78 per cent rise from 667 million dollars in 2024 and a 56 per cent increase compared to 2023.

Seed-stage funding, however, declined to 177 million dollars, falling 40 per cent from last year and 30 per cent from 2023 levels.

Late-stage funding also dropped, reaching 1 billion dollars in 2025, down 26 per cent from 1.4 billion dollars recorded in both 2023 and 2024.

The report noted four funding rounds of over 100 million dollars during the year, led mainly by brokerage and financial services platforms.

Merger and acquisition activity slowed, with 22 acquisitions recorded in 2025. This was a 21 per cent decline from 2024 and a 31 per cent drop compared to 2023.

Exit activity also weakened, as the sector saw only four initial public offerings, half the number recorded in the previous year.

Despite this moderation, Tracxn said India's fintech ecosystem remained resilient. Three new unicorns were created in 2025, a sharp rise from earlier years.

Bengaluru remained the top fintech hub, accounting for 42 per cent of total funding, followed by Mumbai at 29 per cent.

Experts believe focused innovation and long-term confidence will continue to support India's fintech growth ahead.

FUNDING FIGHT FRICTION

Pakistan's IMF ties fuel hope and anger

NEW DELHI

Pakistan remains locked in a tense relationship with the International Monetary Fund, relying on its loans to keep the economy afloat while public anger against the lender keeps growing.

Pakistan's government continues to approach the IMF for emergency funding as foreign reserves shrink and debt payments rise. At the same time, political leaders and former ministers openly blame IMF conditions for worsening daily life.

Local media reports say IMF-backed policies have pushed up power prices, added heavy taxes, slowed factories, and deepened poverty across the country.

Critics argue that instead of focusing on education, science, and technology, Pakistan followed short-term fixes that damaged long-term growth.

They point to falling exports, rising poverty, and a growing number of skilled young people leaving the country in search of better futures abroad.

Industry has been hit hard, with many factories shutting down due to high energy bills, taxes, and uncertain policies.

Business groups claim more than half of units in key industrial zones have closed in recent years.

In provinces like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, hundreds of units are reported to have stopped operations, especially during the last five years.

The textile sector, once the backbone of exports, has suffered badly, with mills closing and thousands of workers losing jobs.

Major global companies have also reduced or ended operations, raising fears about investor confidence.

Experts warn that without stable policies and trust, Pakistan will struggle to attract investment and rebuild its weakened economy. Many believe balanced reforms, local growth, and social support are vital to break the cycle of dependence and public anger before economic pressure turns into deeper crisis.

CSIR skill programme trains over two lakh

NEW DELHI

The CSIR Integrated Skill Initiative has trained more than two lakh workers across India, strengthening national efforts to improve employable skills, the Ministry of Science and Technology said on Friday.

The flagship programme, run by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, aims to connect scientific knowledge with real industry needs. During its first and second phases, over 1.90 lakh people received training through more than 5,200 skill-based programmes.

Special focus was given to rural citizens and women to ensure inclusive growth and wider participation. The initiative supports India's larger goals of Skill India and Atmanirbhar Bharat by building a capable and self-reliant workforce.

The third phase of the programme was launched in June 2025 under the leadership of CSIR Director General Dr. N. Kalaiselvi. This phase places stronger emphasis on advanced skills, closer links between academia and industry, and faster development.

In its first year alone, the third phase has trained more than 14,000 people through over 425 programmes conducted across 37 CSIR laboratories nationwide.

The initiative serves a wide range of beneficiaries, including students, researchers, technical staff, working professionals, farmers, school dropouts, ITI diploma holders, and rural communities.

Training is designed to meet real-world industrial, social, and entrepreneurial needs rather than remaining limited to theory.

New Upcoming Trains in India: A Revolution in Rail Travel

Indian Railways stands at the threshold of a remarkable transformation. As 2026 unfolds, the national transporter is rolling out an ambitious expansion plan that promises to redefine how millions of Indians travel. From semi-high-speed sleeper trains to enhanced connectivity across remote regions, the railway network is experiencing its most significant upgrade in decades.

TAG 2026: The Comprehensive Railway Overhaul

Beyond the headline-grabbing Vande Bharat Sleeper, Indian Railways has implemented an extensive timetable revision known as TAG 2026 (Timetable of Trains 2026). This comprehensive restructuring represents one of the largest operational upgrades in recent history, touching nearly every aspect of the railway network.

Under TAG 2026, Indian Railways has introduced 122 new trains across various categories. The composition of these new services reflects a balanced approach to serving different passenger segments.

The breakdown includes 60 Mail/Express trains, with eight introduced under the TAG-Time on Demand (TAG-TOD) framework that offers more flexible travel options. Additionally, 28 new Vande Bharat chair car trains were added to enhance semi-high-speed connectivity across the country. The expansion also includes 26 Amrit Bharat trains, a fully non-AC service designed to provide quality travel experiences to the common man at affordable fares. Thirteen of these trains were introduced in 2025 alone, bringing the total to 30 Amrit Bharat services running across the network. These trains have been specially designed to enhance comfort for general travelers without escalating fares, making modern train travel accessible to a wider demographic. Premium services have not been neglected either. The new additions include two Rajdhani trains, two Jan Shatabdi trains, two Humsafar trains, and two Namo Bharat Rapid Rail services. The Namo Bharat trains, in particular, are aimed at easing congestion on high-demand shorter routes, providing rapid connectivity between nearby cities.

But introducing new trains is only part of the story. Perhaps even more impressive is the speed enhancement program that has touched 549 trains across the network.

This massive undertaking has resulted in travel time reductions ranging from a few minutes to over an hour. The breakdown shows 376 trains speeded up by 5 to 15 minutes, 105 trains by 16 to 30 minutes, 48 trains by 31 to 59 minutes, and remarkably, 20 trains arriving more than 60 minutes earlier than their previous schedules. The South Western Railway zone led this transformation, speeding up 117 trains, the highest among all zones.

THE HISTORIC LAUNCH: VANDE BHARAT SLEEPER EXPRESS

The most anticipated addition to India's railway fleet is undoubtedly the Vande Bharat Sleeper train, set to make its debut on January 17, 2026. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off this groundbreaking service, marking a new chapter in overnight rail travel across the country. Unlike the existing Vande Bharat chair car services, this sleeper variant is specifically designed for long-distance journeys exceeding 1,000 kilometers.

The inaugural route will connect Kamakhya in Guwahati with Howrah Junction in Kolkata, covering approximately 966 kilometers in just 14 hours and 30 minutes. This represents a significant improvement over conventional trains on the same route, offering passengers a faster, more comfortable alternative to both traditional railways and air travel.

Each Vande Bharat Sleeper train comprises 16 fully air-conditioned coaches, including 11 AC three-tier coaches, four AC two-tier coaches, and one AC first-class coach. The total capacity stands at 823 passengers, with 611 berths in three-tier, 188 in two-tier, and 24 in first-class accommodation. The train will operate six days a week, with stops at strategic locations including Rangiya, Barpeta Road, New Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, New Cooch Behar, New Jalpaiguri, and Kishanganj.

What sets this train apart is its focus on passenger comfort and safety. The sleeper coaches feature ergonomically designed berths with improved cushioning, automatic doors connecting coaches through vestibules for easier movement, and advanced suspension systems that significantly reduce noise and vibration even at speeds of 180 kilometers per hour. During trial runs, the train's stability was so impressive that glasses of water placed on tables didn't spill even at maximum speed. The fare structure has been designed to remain competitive while offering premium services. Third AC tickets will start at approximately Rs 2,300, second AC at Rs 3,000, and first AC around Rs 3,600. For shorter distances, fares begin at Rs 960 for 3AC, making it an attractive option for various budget segments. All passengers will have confirmed berths with no waiting lists, eliminating the uncertainty that often plagues train travel in India.

Safety features include the Kavach anti-collision system, India's indigenous automatic train protection technology that prevents collisions through real-time monitoring and automatic braking. The train also incorporates crash buffers, deformation tubes, and fire barrier walls to ensure passenger security. Indian Railways plans to introduce 10 Vande Bharat Sleeper trains during the financial year 2025-26, with routes likely to include New Delhi to Howrah, Sealdah to New Delhi, New Delhi to Pune, New Delhi to Mumbai, and New Delhi to Secunderabad. By the end of 2026, 12 such trains are expected to be operational, expanding connectivity to states like Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, and Assam. Future expansions may include routes to Kerala, connecting Thiruvananthapuram with Chennai, Bengaluru, and Mangaluru.

Zone-wise Expansion and Improvements

The TAG 2026 implementation varied significantly across railway zones, reflecting regional priorities and infrastructure capabilities. The East Central Railway recorded substantial expansion with 20 new trains introduced, 20 trains extended, and 12 trains speeded up. The Northern Railway added 20 new trains, extended 10 existing services, and speeded up 24 trains, demonstrating a balanced approach to both new services and efficiency improvements.

The North Western Railway introduced 12 new trains, extended six routes, increased frequency on two services, and speeded up 89 trains. This zone's focus on speed enhancement reflects its strategic importance in connecting western India with the northern regions.

The Western Railway introduced 10 new trains and extended 10 routes while speeding up 80 services, maintaining its reputation as one of the busiest and most dynamic zones. The South Western Railway, apart from leading in speed enhancements, also introduced eight new trains and extended six routes while converting eight trains to superfast category.

In eastern India, the Eastern Railway introduced six new trains, extended four routes, and speeded up 32 services. The East Coast Railway added four new trains, extended four routes, and speeded up three services. The Northeast Frontier Railway introduced 10 new trains and speeded up 36 services, significantly improving connectivity to the northeastern states.

The Southern Railway introduced six new trains, extended four routes, converted two to superfast, and speeded up 75 trains. The Central Railway added four new trains, extended six routes, and speeded up 30 services. Even smaller zones like the North Central Railway contributed with two new trains, four extensions, two frequency increases, and one speed enhancement. Additionally, 86 train routes were extended under TAG 2026, improving connectivity to smaller towns and cities. Eight trains saw their frequencies increased, and 10 trains were converted to superfast category, offering faster travel options on key routes.

Infrastructure Modernization and Electrification

The train additions are supported by massive infrastructure investments. Between April and November 2025, Indian Railways commissioned over 900 kilometers of new track lines. This achievement is part of a larger trend: during 2014-25, a total of 34,428 kilometers of new track was laid at an average of 8.57 kilometers per day, more than double the average daily commissioning of 4.2 kilometers per day during 2009-14.

Track renewal has been another major focus area. In 2025, rail renewal was undertaken across 6,880 kilometers of track, with complete track renewal done for 7,051 kilometers. This systematic renewal ensures safer, faster, and more comfortable travel while extending the life of existing infrastructure.

Electrification has reached remarkable milestones. Over 99 percent of the broad-gauge network is now electrified, positioning India among the world's leading nations in railway electrification. This achievement surpasses electrification levels in the United Kingdom at 39 percent, Russia at 52 percent, and even China at 82 percent. A total of 14 railway zones and 25 states and union territories have achieved 100 percent electrification, reflecting a commitment to green operations and environmental sustainability.

Speed improvements have been systematically implemented across the network. Sectional speed has been increased to 130 kilometers per hour over 599 track kilometers, covering parts of the Golden Quadrilateral, Golden Diagonal, and other major routes. Additionally, speeds of 110 kilometers per hour have been achieved over 4,069 track kilometers, combining infrastructure upgrades with advanced track machinery.

Station Redevelopment and Passenger Amenities

The transformation extends beyond trains and tracks to stations themselves. The Amrit Bharat Station Scheme has gained momentum, with 155 out of 1,337 planned stations already redeveloped. These modernized stations feature improved amenities that rival airport facilities, including modern and wider entrances, upgraded toilets, escalators, lifts, and food courts.Sustainability initiatives have been integrated into station development. More than 2,626 stations now operate on solar power, reducing the environmental footprint of railway operations. Free Wi-Fi is available at 6,117 stations, ensuring connectivity for passengers throughout their journey. These improvements reflect a commitment to both passenger convenience and environmental responsibility.

Manufacturing Excellence and Indigenous Development

The expansion has been supported by ramped-up domestic manufacturing. In the financial year 2025-26, up to November 2025, more than 4,224 high-tech Linke Hofmann Busch coaches were produced, representing an 18 percent increase over the corresponding period the previous year. Between 2014 and 2025, coach production increased 18-fold compared to 2004-14, ensuring a steady supply of modern rolling stock. The Integral Coach Factory in Chennai plays a central role in this manufacturing revolution. The facility not only produced the first Vande Bharat Sleeper trainset but continues to work on additional units. Each Vande Bharat Sleeper coach costs between Rs 8 crore and Rs 8.5 crore, which is notably lower than most metro coaches that typically cost Rs 10 crore to Rs 10.5 crore.

Indian Railways has placed major orders to support future expansion. In December 2024, an order for propulsion electrics for 50 rakes of 24-car Vande Bharat Sleeper trainsets was awarded to two leading Indian manufacturers. Medha will supply propulsion systems for 33 rakes, with the order expected to be fulfilled within two years. Full-scale production of 24-car Vande Bharat Sleeper trainsets will commence in 2026-27, further strengthening India's self-reliance in railway technology.

Close to 200 Vande Bharat trains, including both chair car and sleeper versions.

CHALLENGES AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Despite substantial progress, challenges remain. As of 2025, 60 percent of Indian Railway tracks are still not suitable for speeds exceeding 130 kilometers per hour, which is slowing down the transition to high-speed operations.

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project has lagged behind schedule, and passenger grievances regarding overcrowding, maintenance delays, and punctuality increased during peak festival seasons in 2025. The Railway Ministry has announced plans to invest Rs 5.4 lakh crore to upgrade the railways by 2030, with comprehensive improvements including complete electrification, upgraded lines with higher speeds, expansion of new lines, railway station upgrades, and development of a large high-speed train network.

The Research Design and Standards Organisation is undertaking all research, design, and standardization work, while the National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited oversees high-speed rail development.

The upcoming trains and railway improvements represent more than just additions to India's transport infrastructure. They symbolize a nation's commitment to providing world-class travel experiences while maintaining accessibility and affordability for all citizens. From the revolutionary Vande Bharat Sleeper trains that will transform overnight travel to the comprehensive TAG 2026 implementation that touches hundreds of services, Indian Railways is demonstrating that large-scale modernization is both possible and sustainable.

As 2026 progresses, millions of passengers will experience faster journeys, improved comfort, and better connectivity.

The combination of new trains, speed enhancements, infrastructure upgrades, and station modernization creates a comprehensive ecosystem that positions Indian Railways as a vital driver of national growth and development.

RCB proposes AI video analytics FOR CROWD MANAGEMENT

Franchise offers full funding for advanced surveillance to enhance safety, crowd control

BENGALURU

The Indian Premier League franchise Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) on Friday proposed the installation of advanced Artificial Intelligence-enabled video analytics technology at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium to improve crowd management and fan safety. In a formal communication to the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), the franchise suggested deploying between 300 and 350 AI-powered cameras across the stadium premises.

RCB said it is willing to bear the entire one-time cost of the project, estimated at around ₹4.5 crore. The proposal, announced through a statement on social media platform X, is aimed at strengthening surveillance and assisting authorities in preventing overcrowding and safety lapses during major events.

According to the franchise, the proposed system would help the KSCA and law enforcement agencies manage crowd movement more efficiently. The AI-based cameras are expected to enable real-time monitoring of entry and exit points, ensure disciplined queueing, track unauthorised access and significantly enhance overall spectator safety during matches and events.

The initiative falls under RCB Cares, a programme launched by the franchise following the tragic stampede outside the Chinnaswamy Stadium on June 4 last year. The incident occurred during RCB's IPL victory celebrations after the team won its maiden title in 18 years.

Eleven fans lost their lives and at least 50 others were injured in the chaos, prompting authorities to impose severe restrictions on events at the venue.

Since then, no professional cricket match has been hosted at the stadium. Police recently denied permission to stage Vijay Hazare Trophy matches there, citing concerns raised by a review committee. Those matches were subsequently shifted to the BCCI's Centre of Excellence near Devanahalli.

With uncertainty continuing over the stadium's immediate future, RCB has even explored alternative venues, including inspections of the Pune stadium for IPL 2026 matches. The franchise hopes the proposed AI-driven solution will help restore confidence among authorities and pave the way for the return of top-level cricket to Bengaluru's iconic venue.

ICC T20 WC 2026: ICC delegation likely to visit B'desh for final talks

DHAKA

With doubts continuing over Bangladesh's participation in the ICC T20 World Cup 2026, an International Cricket Council (ICC) delegation is likely to visit the country in the coming days for a final round of discussions with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB). The talks are expected to play a decisive role in determining Bangladesh's involvement in the marquee tournament, scheduled to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from February 7 to March 8.

Uncertainty persists as ICC plans crucial in-person discussions with BCB over participation

According to a report, the proposed visit follows a recent video conference between senior ICC officials and the BCB leadership to address the ongoing impasse. The virtual meeting focused primarily on Bangladesh's travel plans for its World Cup fixtures, particularly those slated to be held in India.

The BCB was represented in the meeting by its president Aminul Islam, vice-presidents Shakawath Hossain and Faruque Ahmed, cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen, and chief executive officer Nizam Uddin Chowdhury. During the discussions, the BCB is understood to have reiterated its concerns over player safety and security while travelling to India, formally requesting the ICC to relocate Bangladesh's matches to a neutral venue.

The situation has been further complicated by strained diplomatic relations between India and Bangladesh. Recently, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) asked IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders to release Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman from its IPL 2026 squad, a move seen as reflective of the broader standoff between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh cricket is facing turmoil on the domestic front as well. The BCB has been grappling with internal unrest after senior national players revolted against director Najmul Islam over controversial remarks. Although Najmul was removed from his role as head of the finance committee, the unrest led to the postponement of two Bangladesh Premier League matches scheduled for January 15.

Amid administrative instability and unresolved security concerns, the ICC's proposed visit is expected to be a critical step toward finding a resolution. A final decision on Bangladesh's participation is likely to follow the outcome of these high-level talks.

Goan club players back management with salary reduction amid Indian football crisis

FC Goa players, including India captain Sandesh Jhingan, accept pay cut

NEW DELHI

FC Goa players, including India captain Sandesh Jhingan, along with members of the support staff, have agreed to take a pay cut for the truncated 2025-26 Indian Super League (ISL) season, the club announced. The decision comes amid ongoing financial uncertainty and administrative turmoil in Indian football, with the revised ISL season set to begin on February 14.

In a statement posted on social media platform X, the AIFF Super Cup champions said the club had held "honest and difficult conversations" with its players and staff regarding the challenges facing Indian football. The management described the players' response as a "selfless" act that reflected unity and commitment during a period of crisis.

"In a moment of real uncertainty for Indian football, our first-team players and technical staff stepped forward and chose to support the club by agreeing to reduce their remuneration," FC Goa said. "This was not an easy decision, but it was taken in the best interest of the club."

The club added that it was deeply grateful for the solidarity shown by the squad, underlining that FC Goa stands for more than just results on the pitch. Apart from Jhingan, the club's roster also includes India internationals Udanta Singh and Boris Singh.

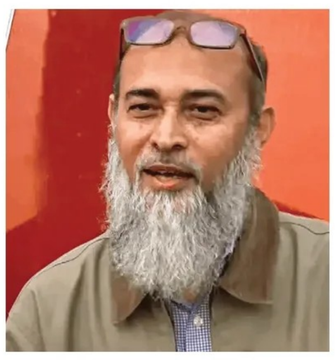
The development comes as ISL clubs grapple with the financial burden of staging a shortened season following a nearly six-month hiatus. Earlier this month, Bengaluru FC owner Parth Jindal had appealed to players to make sacrifices, warning that franchises could face closure without their support.

The 2025-26 ISL season was thrown into uncertainty after the All India Football Federation's former commercial partner terminated the Master Rights Agreement in December. After government intervention, all 14 clubs have confirmed participation in a condensed league featuring 91 matches, with each team playing 13 games.

Board acts amid backlash as BPL matches postponed despite Najmul's removal

BCB removes director Najmul Islam from key post after players' revolt

DHAKA



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has removed Najmul Islam from his position as chairman of the finance committee following strong protests from senior national players over controversial remarks, plunging Bangladesh cricket into renewed uncertainty. Despite the decision, two Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) matches scheduled for the day were postponed, reflecting the severity of the crisis.

Najmul was stripped of his finance portfolio but remains a BCB director. In an official statement, the board said the decision was taken "in the best interest of the organisation," adding that the BCB president would serve as acting finance committee chairman until further notice. The board stressed that player welfare remained its top priority and urged cricketers to continue participating in the BPL with professionalism.

The controversy stemmed from Najmul's comments regarding Bangladesh's potential withdrawal from next month's ICC T20 World Cup in India due to security concerns. He dismissed questions over player compensation, saying players did not deserve remuneration after failing to win an ICC title. The remarks triggered widespread backlash, prompting the Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) to demand his removal. Earlier, the BCB issued Najmul a show-cause notice over his "objectionable comments," asking him to respond within 48 hours.

Career Grand Slam 'a dream' for Swiatek but not key focus in Melbourne

MELBOURNE

World number two Iga Swiatek on Friday said completing a career Grand Slam at the Australian Open would be a dream achievement, but stressed that it is not her primary focus as she begins her campaign in Melbourne. The Polish star underlined that her approach remains firmly rooted in taking one match at a time rather than chasing milestones. Swiatek, 24, has already built an impressive Grand Slam résumé, winning four French Open titles along with triumphs at the US Open and Wimbledon. However, the Australian Open remains the only major missing from her collection. Despite reaching the semi-finals at Melbourne Park on two occasions, she has yet to advance to the final.

"Since the beginning of the year, many people have been talking to me about it," Swiatek said when asked about the prospect of completing the set of all four majors. "But I'm really just focusing on day-by-day work. This is how I've always operated, and it's helped me achieve what I have so far."

She acknowledged that winning Grand Slams is never easy and said she has deliberately avoided setting expectations for herself in Melbourne. "Obviously it would be a dream come true," she said. "But it's not something I wake up thinking about. I'm more focused on how I want to play and what I need to improve."

Swiatek will begin her Australian Open campaign against Chinese qualifier Yuan Yue, coming off a mixed start to the 2026 season. While she was part of the Polish team that won the United Cup in Sydney, her singles form has been inconsistent. She suffered successive losses to Coco Gauff and Belinda Bencic during the tournament. "The Sydney matches weren't smooth and it wasn't an easy start," Swiatek admitted. "There are still things I need to work on, especially mentally."

Nervous Madison Keys vows to enjoy the ride in Melbourne title defence

MELBOURNE

Defending champion Madison Keys on Friday admitted to feeling nervous ahead of her Australian Open title defence but said she is determined to embrace the pressure and enjoy the experience at Melbourne Park. The American, who claimed her maiden Grand Slam crown here last year, believes stepping out of her comfort zone will be key to her campaign.

Keys produced a stunning performance 12 months ago to defeat Aryna Sabalenka in a memorable final, lifting her first major trophy at the age of 29. However, she was unable to build sustained momentum through 2025 and returns to Melbourne this year ranked ninth in the world. Her preparations have been far from ideal. On Thursday, Keys hit close to 50 unforced errors in a warm-up loss to teenage Canadian Victoria Mboko in Adelaide, underlining the work still to be done ahead of her opening match against Ukraine's Oleksandra Oliynykova.

"One of my big goals this year is to force myself to be a little uncomfortable on court," Keys said. "We've been working on new things, and now the hard part is actually trying to implement them in matches, especially in big moments."

She explained that the off-season was focused on evolving her game and adding new dimensions, even if it meant short-term discomfort. "As uncomfortable as it can feel, I'm really trying to push myself to grow and improve," she added.

Keys conceded that returning as the defending champion brings added nerves, but she is making a conscious effort to enjoy the journey rather than shy away from the expectations.

"I'm trying to embrace it and soak it all in," she said. "So often you look back and regret not finding the fun parts, even in stressful and pressured moments."

The 30-year-old said seeing reminders of her triumph around Melbourne Park has been special. "There's a really cool photo of me holding the trophy," she smiled. "That's something you dream of, and getting to experience it is really fun."

She added that spotting her name among past champions would be another moment to cherish — preferably captured on camera and shared with her mother.

Amanda Anisimova targets third Slam final in a row after breakout year

MELBOURNE

Amanda Anisimova said Friday that she is embracing heightened expectations at the Australian Open, drawing confidence from a breakthrough 2025 that saw her reach back-to-back Grand Slam finals. The American believes the lessons learned from her deep runs at Wimbledon and the US Open will be crucial as she bids to make a third consecutive appearance in a major final.

Anisimova, 24, was named the WTA's most improved player last season after surging 32 places in the rankings to reach a career-high world number four. Her rise was powered by standout performances on the biggest stages, beginning with a run to the Wimbledon final and followed by another appearance in the title match at the US Open.

Although she suffered a heavy defeat to Iga Swiatek in the Wimbledon final, Anisimova showed resilience later in the year by defeating the six-time Grand Slam champion in the quarter-finals at Flushing Meadows. She then overcame Naomi Osaka in the semi-finals before pushing world number one Aryna Sabalenka hard in the final, eventually falling 6-3, 7-6 (7/3).

"I'm coming off a great year with a lot of confidence," Anisimova said. "I played a lot of matches, learned a lot about myself, and identified areas where I can still improve."

She added that expectations no longer feel like a burden. "There are expectations, but I use them as motivation," she said, noting that her focus this season is on gaining an extra edge and improving physically and mentally.

After making her first appearance at the WTA Finals, Anisimova had a brief off-season in Miami before opening her 2026 campaign at the Brisbane International, where she exited in the round of 16.

Reflecting on her recent Grand Slam experiences, Anisimova said familiarity with high-pressure situations would help. "Being in those positions before makes things a little easier the next time," she said. "But this is a new Slam, and I'm just taking it one match at a time."

UEFA cites fall in US dollar last year for $55 million loss in accounts

Sharp dollar decline triggers major forex losses, denting UEFA reserves despite strong revenues

GENEVA

European football's governing body UEFA has attributed a $55 million loss in its latest annual accounts to a sharp fall in the value of the U.S. dollar last year, citing unfavourable economic and geopolitical conditions as key factors behind the downturn.

In its financial report for the 2024-25 season, UEFA said a "sudden weakening of the U.S. dollar" resulted in foreign exchange losses of around 47 million euros. The dollar dropped by nearly nine per cent against several major currencies in the early months of 2025, reversing gains UEFA had enjoyed in previous years from a strong U.S. currency.

"In the past few years, UEFA benefited from a strong U.S. dollar leading to substantial gains on foreign exchange," the organisation said in its 52-page report. "In March 2025, however, the tides turned, and the U.S. dollar rapidly weakened, resulting in significant currency exchange losses."

The foreign exchange hit almost entirely accounted for UEFA's overall net loss of 46.2 million euros for the season, which was covered through its financial reserves. Despite the setback, UEFA said its reserves stood at 521.8 million euros (about $605 million) at the end of June, slightly above the 500 million euro threshold it aims to maintain to safeguard funding for its 55 member associations and run national team competitions at all levels.

UEFA noted that holding substantial U.S. dollar positions is unavoidable because of outstanding hedge transactions, making losses "inevitable" when the currency weakened. The governing body pointed to "economic, market and geopolitical dynamics" as contributors to the dollar's decline.

Although UEFA-organised club competitions such as the Champions League generate billions of euros in revenue each season, most of that income is redistributed as prize money and does not translate into profits for the organisation.

UEFA's financial stability is primarily bolstered by the men's European Championship, held every four years. The 2024 tournament in Germany generated about 2.5 billion euros, helping fund UEFA's HatTrick development programme, which provides financial support to national associations across Europe.

The organisation acknowledged that its asset management performance in 2024-25 was "disappointing" compared to the exceptional results recorded the previous season.

Slot 'happy' to welcome SALAH back at Liverpool after AFCON

LIVERPOOL

Liverpool manager Arne Slot on Friday said he would be happy to welcome Mohamed Salah back to the club as the Egypt forward nears the end of his Africa Cup of Nations campaign, playing down recent tensions and stressing the winger's importance to the team.

Salah is set to feature in Egypt's third-place playoff against Nigeria in Morocco on Saturday before returning to Merseyside. His impending comeback has drawn attention after the 33-year-old launched a scathing public attack on Liverpool last month, claiming he was "thrown under the bus" after being benched for three consecutive matches and revealing he had no relationship with Slot.

However, Salah later returned to action as a substitute in a 2-0 Premier League win over Brighton on December 13, providing an assist. Slot subsequently indicated that the club had moved on from the controversy.

Asked about Salah's return ahead of Liverpool's league clash with Burnley, Slot struck a conciliatory tone. "First of all, he still has an important game to play for Egypt on Saturday," the Dutchman said. "After that he comes back to us, and I'm happy he's back. Mo has been so important for this club and for me."

Slot added that even an abundance of attacking options would not diminish Salah's value. "Even if I had 15 attackers, I would still be happy to have him back," he said.

The Liverpool boss declined to elaborate on private discussions with Salah, insisting such conversations would remain confidential. "What happens between Mo and me stays between the two of us," he said.

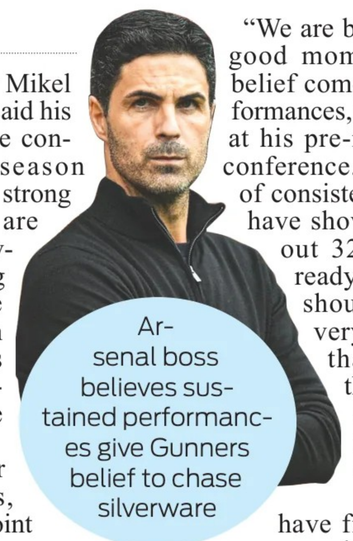
Salah, who scored 29 league goals to win the Golden Boot last season as Liverpool secured their 20th league title, has managed just four goals this campaign. Slot confirmed the forward is expected to rejoin the squad next week.

Liverpool face Marseille in the Champions League on Wednesday before travelling to Bournemouth, with Slot optimistic after an 11-game unbeaten run steadied a season that once threatened to unravel.

Arteta says consistency can fire Arsenal to special season

LONDON

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta on Friday said his side's remarkable consistency this season should give them strong belief that they are capable of achieving something special, as the north London club continues its pursuit of silverware on multiple fronts.



The Premier League leaders, who hold a six-point advantage over second-placed Manchester City, travel to Nottingham Forest on Saturday knowing that sustained performances have put them in a commanding position midway through the campaign. Arsenal have lost just twice across all competitions this season, a record Arteta believes underpins their growing confidence.

"We are building very good momentum and belief comes from performances," Arteta said at his pre-match press conference. "The level of consistency that we have shown throughout 32 games already this season should make us very convinced that we have the ability to do something special."

Arsenal have finished runners-up in the league for the past three seasons and have not lifted a major trophy since winning the FA Cup in 2020. This term, however, they remain in contention across four competitions. The Gunners top the Champions League league-phase table with a perfect record, hold a 3-2 advantage over Chelsea after the first leg of the League Cup semi-final, and are still alive in the FA Cup.

Arteta said the victory at Stamford Bridge earlier this week had further reinforced belief within the squad but warned against complacency. "You have to show it in every game. There is still so much to happen," he said, adding that the focus must remain on maintaining standards.

The Spaniard also welcomed the increased competition for places following squad strengthening, stressing it was essential for a sustained title challenge. "If we want to have any chance of winning the Premier League, we have to be there," he said.

Pointing to recent champions Manchester City and Liverpool, Arteta noted that success demands depth. "No team has done it with just 14 or 15 players," he said, as Arsenal chase their first league title since 2004.

ISL clubs uneasy over AIFF veto power as season schedule hangs in balance

NEW DELHI

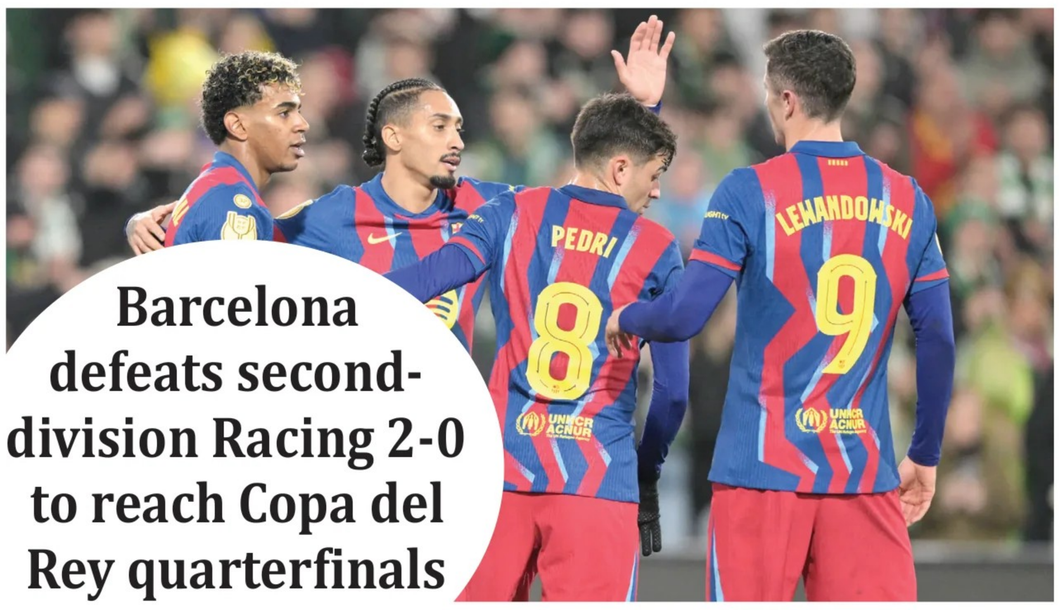
Indian Super League (ISL) clubs have raised serious concerns over the All India Football Federation's (AIFF) proposed veto power within the league's governing structure, a disagreement that could delay the announcement of fixtures for the upcoming truncated season.

While the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has granted ISL clubs indirect slots for continental competition next season, uncertainty continues to loom over domestic matters. During a virtual meeting to discuss the ISL schedule — slated to run from February 14 to May 17 — clubs were informed that a committee would be formed to chart a 21-year roadmap for the league.

The proposed framework includes a governing council and a separate management committee. The governing council will comprise five chief operating officers from ISL clubs, representatives from commercial and marketing partners, and officials from the AIFF. However, the sticking point is a clause that allows the AIFF leadership to exercise veto power in case of disagreements within the council.

ISL clubs have expressed strong reservations, arguing that the federation should not hold veto authority over football-related decisions within the league. According to sources, the clubs fear that such power could undermine their operational autonomy and decision-making role.

An AIFF official confirmed that clubs have been asked to submit their objections and queries regarding the veto provision in detail. The federation is expected to address the issue within two days, after which the ISL fixtures are likely to be released. Meanwhile, the AFC has granted a one-season exemption allowing Indian clubs to qualify for the Champions League Two through play-offs instead of direct slots. The decision followed a formal request from the AIFF earlier this week. Unlike last season, the ISL winners will not receive direct entry and must play qualifying rounds alongside Super Cup champions FC Goa.



Barcelona defeats second-division Racing 2-0 to reach Copa del Rey quarterfinals

MADRID

Defending champions Barcelona avoided a Copa del Rey upset, defeating second-division leaders Racing Santander 2-0 to book their place in the quarterfinals, a day after rivals Real Madrid were knocked out of the competition.

Barcelona's composed performance in northern Spain contrasted sharply with Madrid's shock 3-2 defeat to Albacete on Wednesday, which came in the first match under new coach Álvaro Arbeloa. Mindful of the danger posed by lower-division opposition, Barça were forced to remain patient before finally breaking down a resilient Racing side.

Ferran Torres opened the scoring in the 66th minute, capitalising on a swift counterattack. After receiving a well-timed pass from Fermín López, Torres rounded the goalkeeper and calmly slotted the ball into the empty net. The breakthrough eased the pressure on Barcelona, who had earlier struggled to impose themselves.

Racing came close to equalising on several occasions. Two of their goals were ruled out for offside, in the 77th and 86th minutes, and they squandered a golden opportunity in stoppage time when substitute Manex Lozano was denied in a one-on-one by Barcelona goalkeeper Joan García. Lamine Yamal eventually sealed the victory in the sixth minute of added time, ensuring Barcelona's progression.

"Luckily we have Joan in goal," Torres said afterwards. "These teams are very well prepared and have a lot of quality, which is why these matches are so difficult."

Barcelona coach Hansi Flick opted to rotate his squad, leaving key players such as Robert Lewandowski, Raphinha and Pedri on the bench at kickoff. All three were introduced in the second half as the match opened up.

Before the game, Racing players formed a guard of honour for Barcelona, saluting the Spanish Super Cup winners as they entered the pitch.

Adrien Rabiot inspired AC Milan's 3-1 comeback win at Como, scoring twice, as Allegri's side cut Inter's Serie A lead to three points and revived title hopes after early setback

Rabiot leads Milan comeback as Rossoneri beat Como 3-1 to close Serie A gap

MILAN

Adrien Rabiot played a decisive role as AC Milan fought back from a goal down to defeat in-form Como 3-1, cutting the gap on Serie A leaders Inter Milan to three points and keeping the title race alive.

Milan entered the match under pressure after Inter moved six points clear with a narrow win over Lecce, combined with Napoli's draw against Parma. But Massimiliano Allegri's side responded with a strong second-half display, overturning an early deficit to secure a vital away victory.

The Rossoneri made a sluggish start and were punished in the 10th minute when Como took the lead. A cleverly worked short corner was floated into the box, where Marc-Oliver Kempf rose unchallenged to head past the Milan goalkeeper and give the hosts, who began the night sixth in the standings, a deserved advantage.

Como continued to control large spells of the first half, but Milan found a lifeline just before the interval. Rabiot was fouled in the area by Kempf, earning a penalty that Christopher Nkunku converted, his effort squirming under the body of goalkeeper Jean Butez to level the score at 1-1.

Milan turned the match around completely 10 minutes into the second half. Rafael Leão collected a long cross-field pass, cut inside and lofted the ball into the box for Rabiot, who chested it down and fired a precise volley into the bottom right corner.

The French midfielder sealed the win late on, again showcasing his composure. Niclas Füllkrug headed the ball back into Rabiot's path, and he struck a low, powerful shot into the near corner to put the result beyond doubt.

Elsewhere, Bologna snapped a long winless run by coming from behind to beat Hellas Verona 3-2 in a dramatic encounter. Bologna had not won since November but surged ahead with three first-half goals before holding on, despite an own goal late on, to claim a morale-boosting victory.

India Open chaos continues as bird droppings disrupt Prannoy-Loh clash

NEW DELHI

The India Open continued to make headlines for the wrong reasons as an unusual and unprecedented interruption — bird droppings on the court — disrupted a men's singles match between former world championships medallists HS Prannoy and Loh Kean Yew at the IG Indoor Stadium.

Already under scrutiny over pollution, hygiene and organisation, including an earlier incident involving a monkey straying into the arena, the tournament added another chapter to its growing list of embarrassments when play was halted twice during the high-profile round-of-16 contest.

The interruptions occurred on Court 1 during Prannoy's match against Singapore's Loh. According to Prannoy, the chair umpire stopped play after spotting what appeared to be bird droppings on the playing surface. The first brief halt came in the opening game with Prannoy leading 16-14, as Loh walked up to the net to inspect the area and recoiled in visible discomfort.

A more significant stoppage followed early in the deciding game, with Prannoy ahead 1-0, forcing officials to clean the court before play could resume. "I think it was bird shit which kind of halted the game for a while," Prannoy said later.

Despite distractions, the contest remained intense, with Loh overturning the deficit to defeat Prannoy in three games, while also raising concerns about poor air quality at the venue, conditions persist.

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